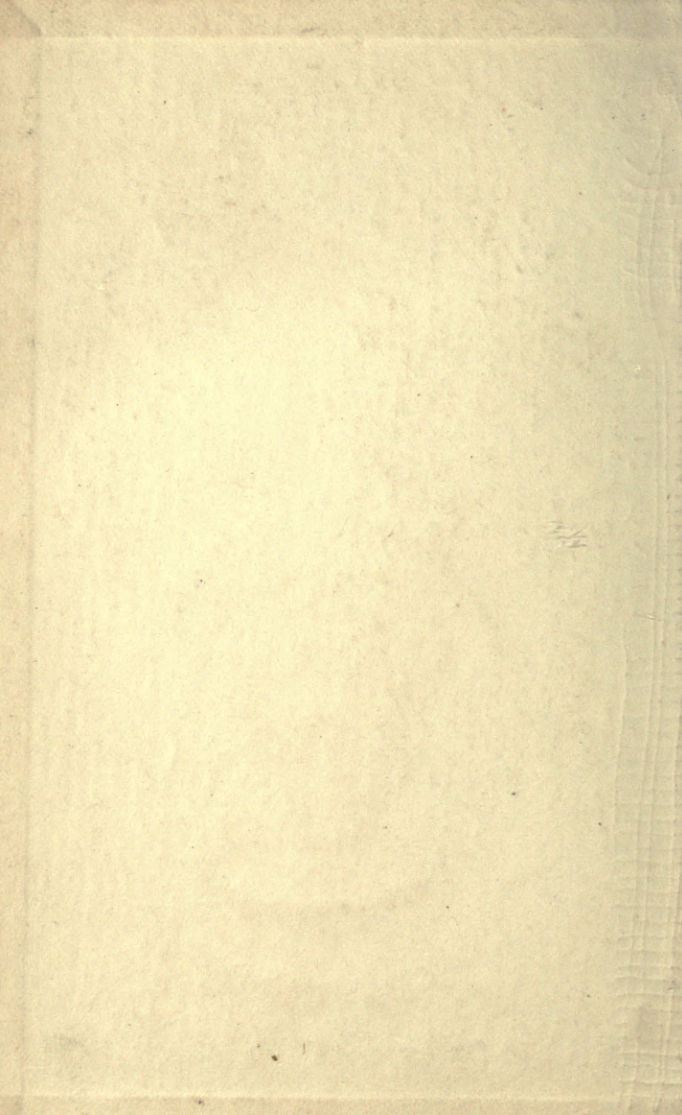


SHERBURNE HOUSE



AMANDA M. DOUGLAS



Merry Christmas
To
Charlie Elerding
From Your
S. S. Teacher

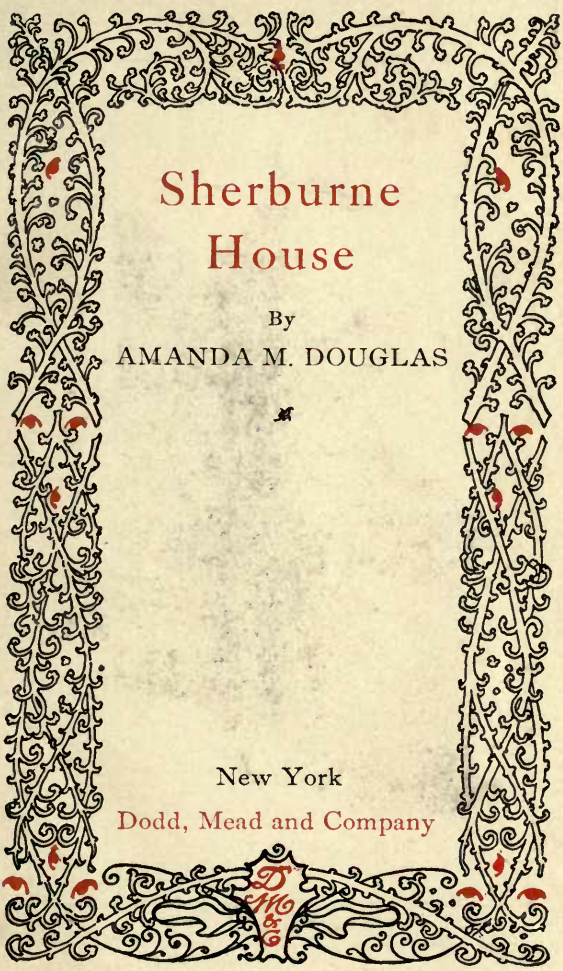
Mrs Larson

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Sherburne House

By
AMANDA M. DOUGLAS

New York
Dodd, Mead and Company

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TO MY YOUNG COUSIN
HELEN DOUGLAS BINGHAM

"But would we learn the heart's full scope,
Which we are hourly wronging ;
Our lives must climb from hope to hope,
And realize our longing."

A. M. D.

NEWARK, 1892.

TO MY FRIENDS
HARRY DUNN AND
MRS. DUNN

IT IS A PLEASURE
TO BE REMINDED
OF THE OLD DAYS
AND THE OLD FRIENDS
BY THE NEW
AND THE NEW FRIENDS

1891

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Sherburne House.

CHAPTER I.

A MIDSUMMER PLAY.

THEY were having a circus of the grandest kind in Murray's Row. At least that was what the boys called it. Dell Murray had cried a little and gone into a "temper," insisting it should be a *matinée*. Probably the affair would have ended in a row, and the children have lost their great pleasure, but for Tessy Murray, who was always a kind of peace-maker or umpire, and had such a sweet, persuasive way.

"Let them have animals and standing on their heads and wild Indians," said Tessy. "That'll be the circus part. And then we girls will have a reg'lar loveley *matinay*. And you shall do Cinderella. And maybe mother'll come out and see you."

A little of the brogue came natural to Tessy, though the public school, that great machine with its almost Procrustean bed, snipped off the odds and ends of nationalities. But when cunning little Tessy wanted to be particularly coaxing, she had a soft, lingering way of stretching out "loveley."

She carried the day for both sides. She coaxed Con to add *matinée* to the cards and begin it with a big M; though he was a little afraid the boys would laugh at him.

A week before Dell had gone to a regular *matinée*. A neighbor, for whom she did errands and swept the sidewalk, had taken her to see Cinderella. Dell knew the story by heart, but such a godmother, such fairy apparel, such a palace and prince, made amends for much sitting in the ashes.

"We'll save up our money," she confided privately to Tessy, "and go our own very selves. It's just gorgeous! And such music! And oh, such dancing! I dream of it just as I am going to sleep, and it floats away off."

Perhaps Dell had been rather demoralized the whole week from the unwonted indulgence, and the plan for repeating it under the old apple-tree. Mrs. Murray had been tried enough with the "colleens." Any other woman would have made a point of heroic discipline. But Densie Murray was the largest-hearted, sweetest-tempered, tenderest-natured woman in all New York. I am not sure her match could be found anywhere. And then Dell was not her own child. That might have excused her for being a little sharper, but instead it made her more lenient. She could always see just how Dell's mother had looked up at her with dying eyes, full of heaven's own trust; and being a good, conscientious, rather superstitious woman, she felt quite sure she should confront the questioning glance of the eyes in that other world, and she wanted to be able to meet them unshrinkingly.

However, to-day Dell had worked like a Trojan. The sweeping and scrubbing had been done with a vim, well done, too. Oh, if you had seen how spick-and-span everything was! The children, too, had been scrubbed and dressed clean. Indeed, all Murray's Row was in a state of wonderful tidiness. For one thing there had been a drenching shower the previous evening, and the pure air and sun were doing their best. Murray's Row was very respectable indeed, quite different from the

tenement rows of to-day. It was but a bit above Central Park, and had even then begun to look queer among the aristocratic houses.

Con Murray with the good trade of a bricklayer, and a new wife, had emigrated sixteen years before this period. With his little money he had bought some rather wild land, given over to goats and squatters, cows, pigs, geese, and chickens. But the march of civilization had swept away the ubiquitous goat and the processions of geese with the patriarch at their head. Con worked steadily at his trade, and built himself a cabin, tilling his "farrum" by odd spells. Con had come full grown, too late for the public school; but he was adaptive, and he honored the ways of the country that had adopted him. When the family outgrew the cabin he built a snug two-story brick house, and, as he could save a little money, erected others. Now there were four besides his own, the corner one. Each had a pretty yard and was tenanted by thrifty, tidy people, two or three of whom they had known in the old country. True, there were no end of children, and the march of civilization was now fain to sweep away Murray's Row, but Con had a long head. Beside, he was doing a thriving business, and the land was a pretty bit of fortune in itself.

It was so bright a spot that people, driving by, often went more slowly to enjoy it. The peaches, pears, and the lovely old, wide-spreading apple-tree gave a wealth of bloom. Later there was no end of roses, carnations, sweetwilliams, dahlias, and, until hard frost came, great mounds of chrysanthemums.

The "show" was under the old apple-tree. This spot was given over to the children by common consent. All the Row were made welcome on Saturday afternoon.

Of the Murrays proper there were seven. Con, junior, was a fine blue-eyed lad, past fourteen, with an ambition to enter the Free Academy, as it was first christened.

Tessy was twelve, Jamsie next, and so on to Laddie, who lay out in the hammock kicking up his chubby bare feet and crowing. It had passed into a proverb that the Murray babies were good and healthy. They lived out of doors in the summer. They had plenty of milk and the best bread in the city. Con, senior, was quite sure of that.

As for the "naybur" children, space would fail me to do them justice. Playing in the Murrays' yard was their acme of delight. When one was particularly obstreperous, Mrs. Murray said :

"Ye'll not be allowed in for a whole week," and the lad glanced through the pickets with large, longing eyes. There never was a more gentle-spoken woman, nor one more readily obeyed.

"Ye do be havin' some kind of bewitchment wid ye," declared old Mrs. McCray, who was grandmother to the flock in the last house.

Dell had desired a kind of artistic entertainment. But she had already learned that concessions had to be allowed to the sterner sex. The boys laughed and made all manner of fun. Catch them taking part in a "gals'" show. And a circus was the regulation entertainment. Hadn't they *always* had a circus?

So they opened with three famous acrobats, who walked around on their hands with their feet in the air, while old Mrs. McCray shrieked and said : "I do be afraid their brains'll run down in their heads." There were some remarkable feats on the trapeze that depended from a good stout limb of the tree. There was a clown in striped garments, who shot off old witticisms adorned with youthful freshness. There were some comic songs of the day, an Irish recitation of Paddy the Piper. Then followed the grand spectacular performance of Cinderella, which had to be viewed largely with the eye of faith. There was no Prince to dance with Cinderella—

she would have none of the street jigs or breakdown ; but Tessy made a very fair godmother, and the old ragged gown fell off at a touch of the wand, and disclosed Dell in one of rather faded pale blue, with a wide pink sash that had seen several washings. There was a band, consisting of harmonica, flageolet, and clappers. Dell was going through with some very graceful evolutions. Grandmother McCray nodded to the rhythm, and her wide cap-ruffle flapped to and fro. A few other women sat sewing or knitting and applauded with a "See that now!" "Ah, but it's a fine show, and all made up of themselves!"

A *coupé* came slowly up the avenue and halted. It contained two persons besides the driver. A tall, spare, dignified-looking man, and a woman of sixty or thereabouts, elegantly attired in a fine grey serge, with silken trimmings edged with black thread lace. Her bonnet was of black lace with a few rich purple flowers. Her gloves fitted exquisitely, her fan and satchel were expensive, and there was about her the unmistakable air of being at home amid luxury, an abhorrence of vulgar commonness that curled her lip, and deepened the disdainful lines in her face, as she caught sight of the crowd of barefooted and rather disheveled children, and the old Irish woman with a decidedly snub nose and the wide cap border.

"Is this Murray's Row?" sang out the driver.

"Ye's can bet yer head it is," replied a shock-headed boy nearest the fence.

"Which is Mr. Murray's?"

"The corner, sure."

Dell was dancing at the King's Ball. She wanted none of the shuffling heel-and-toe business. Her brain was full of graceful evolutions, and she had a secret misgiving that her practice did not attain to the bewildering theory, although one of the boys sang :

“She’s gay and she’s airy,
And light as a fairy.”

But she was listening to the delicious strains of the orchestra and executing a marvelous *pas seul* with her bare arms up in the air, and her brown-red hair flying about. Her dress was decidedly short, her boots generously large. Mrs. Murray bought them for the children to grow into, but they oftener wore out first. There was a long length of dingy stocking that had once been blue.

There are first glances that stamp like or dislike almost ineffaceably on the beholder. As Miss Sherburne leaned forward a trifle, with an expression of supercilious contempt, Dell turned and really stared in an insolent sort of way, and brought down her heel with an emphasis of bravado. Why fate should have directed this crossing of glances, this sharp settling of aversion, was one of the unsolved mysteries. The girl’s angry eyes shot back defiance, and she danced the more vigorously.

Perhaps I had better describe Dell, as she appeared to Miss Sherburne that June afternoon. A girl of thirteen, running largely to arms and legs, yet with a plump body and rather full face, flushed with the exertion—daring, aggressive. A somewhat wide mouth that shut with dimples in the corners, but unfortunately it was not closed then. Later she came to know the force of resolution Dell could shut into it. There was a broad, cleft chin, an ordinary nose, a round, full forehead, with fine brows that gave it decisive character. A thick mop of curly hair that had not shed its childhood’s gold, was in process of growing out, and presented the appearance of a tawny mane with faded streaks. The eyes were peculiar. In repose a lovely dark, soft, velvety brown, with curious curling lashes that made a swift dazzle when she glanced up. Her complexion was naturally fair, but now she was tanned to a gypsy brilliance.

The *coupé* turned the corner and paused before the door.

"Hi!" cried Jem Dooley, who had been following it with his eyes. "Ain't they swell folks! Grand dooks, in a coach of state! What you s'pose they want with yer mother, Con?"

Con Murray peered around the corner of the house. The two passengers were alighting.

"How sh'd I know? Maybe they just don't. Mor'n likely it's some one to see father 'bout a new house or something!"

Curious eyes studied the horses that stood switching the flies under the shade of the great maple. Nothing happened. The *matinée* audience resumed their watching of Cinderella, who finished her steps and postures with a grace that brought rounds of applause.

Be merry while you can, Dell. You will never dance with such a light heart again. There will never be such a bit of glamour as this old apple-tree, the radiant blueness of the sky, and the quivering sunshine all about you, like the waves of a golden sea. And the gypsy group of children, over whom you reign a sort of queen, the young, round-eyed mother with her baby in her arms, the elderly women who are sunning themselves and imagining a "bit of ould Ireland," the soft shadows here and there, the gay hearts, laughing eyes, not over critical tastes in simple pleasures, the boundless possibilities, the temper of childhood in its freemasonry of give and take, the sense of unalloyed enjoyment, of unstinted praise will never be yours in this fashion again. For Fate and Fortune have stretched out their long, relentless fingers to grasp you, and you cannot elude them. What they demand is your future from this time out.

Dell sat down and fanned herself with her dress skirt. The boys, with some shawls and a water-proof, were being transformed into a trained elephant.

"Ah, dear," said Granny McCray, with the sort of caressing intonation of an Irishwoman; "ah, dear, it was jist ilegant! Sure if ye were out Midsummer Ave ye'd see the little people in the ring, and yer mother had a look—feeble and wan as she was—of that strange country that's nayther heaven nor earth—the saints rist us! For whoever's been there, jist wan time, carries the mark."

Mrs. Murray had gone indoors to attend to some household duties. She answered the driver's summons. The lady beckoned her to the side of the *coupé*, with an authoritative gesture. Mrs. Murray came, with the courtesy of old-world deference.

"Is Mr. Constantine Murray at home?" Miss Sherburne did not suppose that possible, but she recognized the head of the house.

"No, mem. He's my husband. Would you be wanting to see him?"

"Did a person die at this house some four years ago?" the lady questioned sharply, quite certain she would be able to detect any attempted falsehood.

"Ah, yes, mem. Maybe that was poor Mrs. Sherburne. Perhaps you may be some of her husband's kin, that she wrote to?"

The lady gave a slight, impatient wave of the hand.

"Did she—do you know whether she has any issue alive?" in a rather peremptory manner.

Mrs. Murray stared. "Alive, is it? Perhaps you are meanin' the little girl. She gev her to me, if no one ever came to claim her. And sure she's been like one of my own. A nice, strong, bright slip of a girl, with a pleasant temper and a warm heart. Would you be wanting to see her?"

The lady drew a long vexed breath. She had not wanted so much information, so much certainty dashed into her very face. Then she glanced at her compan-

ion. She could not shirk her duty, unpleasant as it was.

"I suppose we had better alight."

The driver opened the door. The gentleman assisted her as if he might be handing out a princess.

"About how long shall I say—half an hour?" he asked, as the driver stood awaiting orders.

"Half an hour?" incredulously.

"Yes, you will need that time, at least. Call for us in half an hour;" to the driver.

Then he escorted the lady, with stately courtesy, up the flower-bordered path.

Mrs. Murray ushered them into her orderly parlor. The windows had flowing white drapery. There was a parlor suite in maroon reps; a centre table holding on its marble top a basket of wax fruit, that had filled her cup with joy when Con brought it home to her at Christmas. There were vases of artificial flowers on the mantel, photographs of the children, and several chromos—rather well chosen.

When they were seated the gentleman took out a slip of memorandum.

"A Mrs. Sherburne came to America four years ago, about the middle of April, bringing with her a little girl, then nine years of age, a Miss Margaret Murray accompanying her——"

"That's my husband's sister. She's married and lives over on the East side, where her husband keeps a grocery. You see, the poor thing was far gone in consumption, but the doctor thought a sea voyage might set her up. And Maggie did for her on the steamer, and grew fond of her and the child. The poor thing had no home to go to, and no friends, not but what she had money enough to pay her way. Con—that's my husband—went down to give Maggie welcome in a strange country, and when he heard the story and saw the poor

body, who looked like a ghost, having been sick all the passage, his big, tender heart opened at once, and he brought her here. She was very ill for several weeks, then she began to mend. She counted so on getting well. Then she wrote to her husband's people. She was English born and bred, and a pretty-spoken woman, with a sweet face, for all it was so thin and wan. Her husband, it seems, had died in England, but his people lived here, and there was some property coming to the child. I don't just remember," with a line of perplexity across her brow.

"And she died—" annotated the gentleman.

More than once Miss Sherburne had made a gesture with her hand to check the soft, flowing speech, but Mrs. Murray continued, unheeding:

"Yes. Con had no faith in her improvement, though she went around out of doors and enjoyed the flowers and the childer. But she was main worried about the letter. And one morning, near the last of May, Maggie was combing her hair—such beautiful long golden hair, rare to see—when she threw up her arms sudden-like and uttered a wild cry. I ran in to see, and the blood was trickling all over her white gown. 'Oh,' says she, 'be good to my little girl! I trust her to you just as if you were my sister. Be good to her until her father's people send for her, as they must sometime.' Then she looked over at the far corner of the room, a lovely light breaking in her face, and cried with a strange joy: 'I'm coming to you, my darling'; then her head dropped on Maggie's bosom and she was gone."

"And the little girl"—said the gentleman suggestively, touched by the simple recital.

"Ah, it was a hard time for her. But I've tried to keep my word. She's been like one of my own."

"Were there no papers of any kind?"

"Papers, is it? Yes, a whole boxful. There's her

marriage lines and wedding ring and trinkets and letters. Con has them in the safe at the office. And her clothes are in a trunk upstairs. She was a real lady and had lovely things. And there was some money. After she was buried Con put that in the bank, for the little girl. He wouldn't have a penny of it spent. Maggie can tell you more of her story. I've had so many things to look after, and babies."

"Then we cannot have the papers? Where is your husband? We will go to him at once."

"Sure it would be hunting a needle in the hay. He's paying off the men at different buildings. And he won't be home until six."

"How extremely annoying!" lamented the lady.

"Sure," said Mrs. Murray, with unconscious sarcasm, "since you've waited four years or more, a few hours cannot matter. You can see Con this evening."

"We should not have waited four years," replied Miss Sherburne, with asperity, "but the letter was mislaid—to our great regret."

"We might drive over and see this—this sister," remarked the gentleman.

"Maggie will tell you the whole story."

"We know a great deal that she cannot tell us," said Miss Sherburne shortly.

"We might see the child," suggested Mr. Whittingham.

"I'll call her in a bit." Mrs. Murray flashed out of the door and tripped through the hall to the large back porch. Barney Blake was drinking out of the cocoanut dipper.

"Run, Barney, and tell Dell I want her this minute. She can come back to the frolic."

Dell came flying down the path, with an apprehensive look in her eyes.

"Come in and be red up a bit. Brush your hair, and

I'll run for your pink gingham. There's some one to see you."

"That woman in the carriage, is it?"

"I do not know whether it is your father's people, but it is about—that. Your mother knew they would come—quick, dear."

But Dell had not moved a muscle when Mrs. Murray returned.

"Ah, dear," began the soft, persuasive Irish voice that Con said could coax the heart out of a grindstone, "ah, dear, you wouldn't want to shame me! It's me they'd blame for not having you tidy and nice-mannered—and your mother a real lady. You'll be sweet now, for my sake—and Con's."

She unbuttoned her faded dress and slipped the other over her head. She was very deft at dressing the children. Then, while Dell reluctantly changed shoes and stockings, Mrs. Murray brushed her hair.

"I don't want them to call me a slattern," she said. "People don't understand how much more fun children have in old clothes."

Against her will, manipulated by the soft, irresistible hands, Dell was transformed into tidiness. True, her face was still flushed, and the light in her eyes was not an attractive one; the eager, sunny joy had vanished. At this period Dell was not as handsome a child as her dying mother had left, or as she might be in years to come. And just now there was a bitter protest seething in her soul, not so much from a thought of past neglect as a fear of the future.

"This is the child," announced Mrs. Murray. "She's gone by our name, and been like our very own. She's a nice, bright, truthful child, quick at her lessons, and handy in many ways. Next year'll see her in the graduating class—and she's ready for her examinations. Con's a great hand for learning."

Dell glanced straight across at Miss Sherburne defiantly, her lips compressed, her nose drawn down haughtily. The brown eyes shone with a crystal gleam. Child as she was, a race antagonism developed in an instant.

Miss Sherburne glanced her over superciliously. If a look could have extinguished her, the heiress of Sherburne House would have vanished from this mundane sphere.

"She doesn't seem to resemble her father's family," said Mr. Whittingham, in an effort to break the awkward silence.

"Not at all; not at all. And Mrs. Murray we shall insist upon the most exact agreement with what we already know. We have sent to England and unearthed all the facts of the case—that is, if the mother has not deceived any one."

Mrs. Murray blushed a distressful scarlet. "Ah," said she in her soft, lingering tone, "I'm a mother myself. I know a little about a mother's love."

"You do not know the circumstances, nor how much there was at stake," rejoined the visitor sharply. "A woman who will scheme in one way will not hesitate to scheme in another. I suppose she looks like her mother?"

Densie Murray's cheeks burned with indignation. "Her mother had been very handsome I'm that sure, and she had the finest skin, the most beautiful golden hair you ever saw!"

"Which is very apt to turn red in the next generation. Well, where can we find this person who came over with her?" and the lady rose—tall, dignified, austere looking.

"Maggie? She is Mrs. Warden, and lives on Second Avenue. And you can depend upon her word. I'm sure we would have no interest in telling a wrong story"—rather indignantly.

"About the papers?" questioned Mr. Whittingham.

"I suppose we cannot get at them to-night, more is the pity. Let us see—will you ask Mr. Murray to call at the Hotel—say at three to-morrow?" glancing at his companion. "I will give you our address."

They both walked to the door, the lady taking no further notice of Dell, who stood rigid and resolute. The sleeping lion had never been roused before.

"Dell, dear!" Mrs. Murray had dismissed her guests, and now took the child in her arms.

"Do they want me? Are they my papa's people? Well, I hate them! I hate her, that woman! And they shall never take me away from you, never!" and Dell stamped her foot passionately on the floor, while a hard, dry sob tore its way up from her inmost heart.

"There, there, mavourneen, don't begin to worry. They may not want you at all. Sometimes, in the old country, I've known lots of trouble about entails and all that, and estates that couldn't be settled until everybody was accounted for," and Mrs. Murray drew a long breath, swamped among legal possibilities. "There, run and finish your play."

"I never will go with that woman. If they take me, I'll run away! And if you won't have me, I'll drown myself in the river."

"Have you? We will always have you, my darling. It would break Con's heart to give you up. But see, dear, it's getting the fag end of the afternoon, and the childer will soon have to go, and there'll be all the things to put away. You needn't take off your pretty pink gown. Run out, and have a bit of fun to even up your temper. Come, dear. I dare say it will all go right."

She kissed the hot brow, her own tender tears softening the passionate fever of tumult. Dell clung to her as if she could not, dared not let her go. Some awful, unlooked-for possibility darkened the future.

CHAPTER II.

THE PHANTOM OF THE PAST.

THE delight had gone out of all things for Dell. Poor Cinderella stood in a worse plight than her prototype. The rags were not so bad at midnight, when she could crawl back to her chimney-corner and ashes. But if the friendly corner had vanished?

"You don't do nothin' as ye did afore," protested Teddy O'Brien. "Ye're so fine in yer best pink gown, ye put on frills, ye do that! I'm tired o' gals' play! Boys, let us have a rousin' Injun round-up!"

Rousing it was. Such a shriek of war-whoops! The girls ran a little, but they fell an easy prey to their fierce Indian captors, who were rather disgusted at such a passive victory, and began to berate them. Mrs. Murray rang the bell, which was a signal for them to throw down their arms and disperse.

"What did those big bugs want o' you?" asked Con gruffly, as they were bringing in the stage properties.

Dell glanced at him wild-eyed. "I don't quite know," she made answer. "And I hate them."

Tessy, Dell, and some of the girls were gathering the stools, shawls, and playthings. They lingered at the gate to talk over the gossip, and wondered a little why Dell was called in and dressed up. The boys had to brush and wash—their heads rejoiced in the O'Reilly cut, a little longer than the more recent machine invention. The baby and the two youngest had their suppers of bread and milk and were put to bed. Then the table was set in readiness for Con; Dell managing between whiles to explain the interview.

"But we really do not know anything for certain," said Mrs. Murray. "Don't talk of it outside."

Con came home, kissed them all round, washed up, and put on some fresh garments. Then they had their supper and tried to be merry as usual, but it was a dismal failure.

"Whom did mother scold?" Con glanced around, with a twinkle in his eye.

"There was no one scolded," replied Densie. "They've had a circus, and they've been the best children in the world. But something uncommon *has* happened, and after supper we must go over to Maggie's. I'll tell you on the way."

Tessy and Dell cleared away the tea-things. Con, in virtue of his big-boyhood, was allowed an hour out of doors on the block, and he rarely broke his parole. The others were put to bed presently, then Dell and Tessy settled themselves on the front doorstep, and speculated as to who the two visitors could have been.

"The man wasn't so hard and cross, and he looked at me curious like," and Dell frowned, "but he made me feel kind of shriveled up, like an autumn wind. Papa did not have any brothers, but oh," with a sharp cry of fear, "I am afraid *she* was his sister who was so very angry when he married mamma."

"But maybe they will not want you. O Dell, I couldn't let you go away!" and the two girls huddled closer together.

As they talked, Dell tried to recall her own mother more distinctly. Her tall, slim figure, her cloud of golden hair, her enchanting music, the sweet, sad face, and the tender love. A feeling of remorse seized her—she had forgotten so much. She had been so happy, so full of study and play and interest in the babies and everything. Con and Densie had been the tenderest of parents to her, and comforted her in that sad time. Her

own papa she scarcely remembered. Her associations clustered more about his picture, and her mother's reminiscences of him. The journey across the ocean, the illness and death seemed even now more like a vivid dream than any actual occurrence. That her mother had come to America to learn something about her father's people she knew, but the Murrays had never referred to a possible fortune. Indeed, as the answer to her letter had never come, they fancied the poor wife had been deceived in her husband's account of himself. Such cases were not uncommon. Perhaps if Dell had been usually beautiful or had carried about with her some distinguishing marks that we are wont to ascribe to good birth, she might have aroused a firmer belief in the possibilities of fortune.

"And in case no one ever does come to claim her she'll have to take the common everyday life," said sensible Con Murray. "It will be no kindness to fill her head with dreams that can never come true. We'll bring her up like one of our own, and we'll never miss the bite and sup and the love. Sure, Densie, there's as much love in our hearts to-day as when little Con was born, and it's been divided many a time since. It's like cutting flowers—you have new ones, and more and more sweetness all the time. The Lord's been rare good to us in this New World, and sure we ought to be good to the little child he sets on our very doorstep."

And bountifully good they had been. The love and interest had diverted her thoughts from the lonely past, and made it seem more dream-like. Dell attached herself warmly to her new friends. There awoke a wider, more vital eagerness in her soul. Only very morbid childhood revels in sadness. There was too much fun and incident among the Murrays to allow of introspection. And their religious faith was of the simplest order, which not unfrequently leads to the highest rules of con-

duct in many things. Perhaps her four years' association with the Murrays was the best thing that could have happened to Dell after her rather intense and secluded life with her mother.

Con came back and chaffed the girls awhile, then ungallantly retired to bed. Tessy grew drowsy. They shut the door and Tessy dropped on the sofa, but Dell sat wide-eyed, waiting for a word out of that dreaded future, and fortifying herself into high resolves.

Mr. and Mrs. Murray returned, having put in the marketing on the way home. Dell sprang up with passionate eagerness.

"Oh, what *did* Aunt Maggie say?" she cried. "Did that dreadful woman go to her? But they shall never, never take me away. Oh, papa Murray, you will not let me go!"

"My dear, my dear!" Con kissed her, with tears in his eyes. "That dreadful woman as you call her is your father's aunt, your grandfather's sister. And there is a good deal about it and a big fortune. I haven't it all straight in my own mind, but I shall hear to-morrow. Oh, my darling, we shall always love you, never fear about that. And now, colleen, run to bed."

Dell was soon asleep, and, when she awoke in the magnificent morning, she could not believe God would let anything come to make her miserable. The three girls were dressed in white and wended their way to Sunday School, the Murrays being Protestants. The boys had gone on ahead. It was the opinion of the neighborhood that such a fine flock was rarely seen.

Then Con and Densie talked over the strange and totally unlooked-for outcome of Dell's fortune. Maggie Warden had been much shrewder than Mrs. Murray, and learned more concerning the visitors. But Con was so dazed by the unusual turn of affairs that he thought it wise to go and have a little talk with his part-

ner, Mr. Cranston, and be sure that it was his duty to deliver up these important papers. So, immediately after dinner, he started.

Certainly Constantine Murray was a fine-looking man as he walked with his firm step over to the avenue. He was now about thirty-seven, an inch or so under six feet, well filled out, with a strong decisive sort of manliness that won favor at once. People found him trusty, a man of his word. His honest, rather humorous face, with its deep Irish blue eyes and almost blue black hair, was attractive. Murray's Row and the burthen of seven children, beside the stranger within his gates, sat lightly upon him. Giving Dell food and shelter and love was an easy matter compared with giving her up.

His partner was a good deal interested in the story. He had seen the little girl, and now he was touched by the great, fatherly heart of the man he had always admired for his uprightness and business capacity.

"It's rather fortunate that you had not the papers in the house," commented Cranston. "You will have an opportunity to learn a little more about the matter. I suppose there can be no trickery in the case, but it is queer that they have delayed so long to claim her. Perhaps they only want possession of the documents."

"Ah, if that was all! But she'll fight against going away, and it'll be like a death in the family to us. For you see she's just like our own."

"But if these are really her father's relatives they will have the best right to her. Find out what you can, and be sure they are reliable. And if you are in need of a witness or friend, I'm your man, Con. We will talk it over to-morrow morning before you take the final step."

"Thank you," said Con. But he went his way with a heavy heart.

It was years before he was to know all the story,

but it is best to relate it here. The Sherburnes were an old, aristocratic Virginian family. For generations Sherburne House had been a sort of county landmark. There had been several men of note in it, all were handsome, high-spirited, and chivalrous. Of the branch left in the old homestead, Edward Carrick Sherburne had married an heiress, a Miss Lyndell, and to them were born five daughters, two dying in infancy, and then the coveted son.

This filled Grandfather Sherburne's heart with joy. The lad throve finely. The old gentleman willed him Sherburne House and the estate, also some mineral lands in a distant county; subject to his father's right and use while he should live, and charged also with the maintenance of his only single daughter, Miss Aurelia.

Mrs. Sherburne had died while her boy was still in his infancy. Miss Aurelia kept the house, matronized the daughters, married the eldest one successfully, who, in turn, performed the same kind offices for her sisters. Old Mr. Sherburne died soon after Ned entered college. The heir, beyond a peradventure, of such a handsome estate could not fail of winning his way into notice and admiration. He was manly and attractive, had many good qualities and few bad ones. He graduated from Harvard in very fair standing, and went at once to Newport, where his eldest sister, Mrs. Beaumanoir, was entertaining with true Southern hospitality and not a little exclusiveness.

She had made some plans for her brother. A certain young lady, with a fortune in her own right, whose mother, now dead, had been a connection of the Beaumanoir family, was selected, and she cautiously threw the young people together.

Judge Varick had married a second time, a pretty young girl, almost as blooming as Miss Isabel. There were three younger children—two picturesque little

girls. For these the mother had secured an English governess while abroad the preceding year, the daughter of a clergyman, whose refined manners and pleasant companionship had quite charmed her.

Honora Trenholme's home was dull, and in an uninteresting neighborhood. Her father, when almost at middle life, had displeased his family by espousing poverty when he might have had riches. He was a student and a dreamer. When his wife died he sent his little girl to an excellent school, but on her return, a young woman, she found nothing to attract or entertain. She met Mrs. Varick, and the children took a great liking to her. She went over to Germany with them; then came to America. And this summer, at Newport, young Sherburne was a welcome visitor. Miss Varick had hosts of admirers. He was not a very enthusiastic one; indeed, he seemed greatly to prefer Mrs. Varick and the children.

How he came to fall in love with Honora Trenholme; how any one falls in love unwisely, in the face of family traditions and expectations, no one can explain. She did not dream of such a thing. She gently, perhaps heroically, refused him. Then she decided, as her two years' engagement was about ending, and her father had fallen in feeble health, to return to England. Mrs. Varick's aunt, a widow lady, was to return in October, and she arranged to go with her.

When the steamer sailed Edward Sherburne was among the passengers. Mrs. Goodrich made an indulgent, perhaps unwise, chaperon. Honora was touched with the charming young fellow's devotion. It seemed so different out here on the ocean, away from the stricter regulations of society. Honora listened, loved, accepted. When she reached the rambling old English Rectory, where the feeble white-haired man welcomed back his child, she consented to a speedy

marriage, as she found what a satisfaction it would be to him. He warmly admired the young Virginian.

They went to Southern France for the winter. Sherburne delayed announcing his marriage. Mrs. Goodrich casually mentioned it in a letter. Isabel Varick flew with the tidings to Mrs. Beaumanoir, and great was the indignation evoked, although at first the young man's family could not believe him so recreant to tradition.

"I always felt she was one of your soft, fair, scheming women," said Isabel. "My stepmother has not an atom of penetration, and Mrs. Goodrich is positively silly. But it is dreadful for his future to be ruined in that manner."

When Ned Sherburne announced his intention of taking a run through Europe, his father had supplied him liberally with funds. He was but two-and-twenty. Mrs. Beaumanoir was fifteen years his senior, and all of his sisters were married. Not the slightest suspicion of a love affair had been roused in any one's mind, but when young Mrs. Varick heard he had sailed on the same steamer, a little uneasiness pervaded her for Miss Trenholme's sake, but she discreetly refrained from any comment. The most surprised person was Honora Trenholme. And, though the Sherburnes always believed it had been at her instigation, she was entirely innocent of any complicity.

Mr. Sherburne wrote at once, bidding his son deny such a ridiculous story. Thus pressed, Edward frankly acknowledged his marriage. The Sherburnes, one and all, were bitterly indignant. Mr. Sherburne at once cut off his son's allowance, upbraiding him for deceit, and a step he must have known was in the most flagrant opposition to their wishes. And as, at this period, Edward had positively nothing in his own right, it rendered him penniless. It was too late to interfere with the provisions

of the grandfather's will. The young man was absolutely stunned. He felt that he had acted with injudicious haste and not paid his family proper respect, but he was extravagantly in love, and looked hopefully toward the future.

"Of course it *must* be made up," he said to Honora. "You see Sherburne House is mine after my father is done with it. It belongs to me and my heirs inalienably, as well as some coal and iron lands that may be rendered profitable. My father has the sole right during his life, but he cannot cut me off, you see—only from present income. And I know they will all relent. I am the last of the Sherburne name, the only son," and he smiled proudly.

Honora could not regret her marriage, and yet she was sorry it had not been more wisely considered. They went to Switzerland, in the summer, for cheaper living. Mr. Trenholme died and they returned to England. His family had him interred in their parish burying ground. His daughter was married—they had never taken any notice of her, and were not likely to now. His income ended with him, and the young people were thrown upon their own resources. They went up to London where, after a while, Sherburne obtained employment, and presently their little girl was born. She was christened Honora Lyndell, and they adopted the diminutive of Dell. He announced this fact to his father, but to his great chagrin it elicited no response.

Still, they were very happy. If they struggled now there would be an abundance in their declining years. Meanwhile the Civil War had broken out. There were times when Edward Sherburne longed to fly to the rescue of his country, for though the family deprecated the causes, they were loyal to the old Union. In fact, slavery had ceased to be profitable on these borders of freedom, and before Grandfather Sherburne's death the greater

part of the slaves had been sold to more distant and secure keepers. But the young husband felt that he must stand by his wife, since he had in a degree isolated her from all other prospects. And so passed nearly five pleasant years. Then Sherburne was taken ill with a fever, and inside of a fortnight lay dead in the pretty cottage. His little son was born prematurely some hours after the shock, and died also.

The Sherburnes ordered the body sent home, but took no further note of the young widow and her child. Indeed, in their first unreasoning grief, they laid the cause of his death at her door and were intensely bitter against her. Mr. Sherburne had a wild hope that, somehow, there being no son, the entail might be broken.

Honora struggled back to health for her child's sake. She was a fine musician and presently began to teach, as the illness and death had made sad inroads on their savings. Her leisure was devoted to her passionate grief. A cruel fate had snatched her husband from her and left her to bitterest solitude. She could not even have the poor comfort of praying at his grave or strewing flowers over it. And Lyndell was one of the healthy, irrepressible children, with no morbid tendency, to whom crying and sadness were distasteful. As was to be expected, the labor and the excessive grief began to undermine a naturally good constitution. When she first became aware of her impaired health she began to consider the future of her child. She shrank from facing death as a factor, but if her husband was certain of the situation—and it seemed as though he could not be mistaken, that he had in any way deceived or misled her she would not believe—then her child's most vital interest would be in America, and at Sherburne House. If she had started at once—but it seemed hard to seek refuge in a strange country, and perhaps with unfriendly relatives. When she had to relinquish her church singing,

and found herself unequal to lessons, she knew she must take the step at once. The physician talked hopefully of the sea voyage. She remembered Mrs. Varick's kindness to her, and the new world did not appear quite so dreary.

But alas! She was extremely ill on the journey. Maggie Murray, who had taken to the child at the first interview, offered to nurse her, as she needed a constant attendant. And when they landed, it was Con Murray's kindness and intervention that kept her from a hospital.

For a while Honora could not make the slightest exertion. Maggie and Mrs. Murray were ministering angels. Dell took to the children with the wildest sort of delight, and became a favorite at once.

Honora Sherburne told her kind friends her pitiful story. She wrote to her husband's people and waited vainly for an answer, resolving that, as soon as she was able, she would go to them and learn her fate. But the time never came. She alternated a little, and at length the end occurred suddenly.

Once she had said to Mr. Murray :

"If any evil should befall me, will you keep my little girl and care for her until such time as she can repay your kindness? This box of papers I give into your sacred charge, and do not allow them to fall into any hands that would destroy them. They prove my child's identity and claim. Oh, be good to her and heaven will surely reward you."

Con promised, with tears in his kindly eyes. But his experience had been wider, and several deceptions in marriage had come under his notice.

They buried Mrs. Sherburne in a pretty rural cemetery, and Con put up a suitable monument. There was still about seven hundred dollars left.

"We'll put that in the bank for the colleen," he said to his wife. "We'll never miss the bite and sup we give

her. I misdoubt whether any word comes. You see it might be so that they could cut out the young man, and he not exactly know it. So it isn't best to put wrong ideas into the child's head, if she has to grow up like ours and earn her living."

"To be sure," returned Densie. Con was the epitome of wisdom in her eyes. He was blessed with much shrewdness and common sense, and being a perfectly temperate man, his good judgment was seldom dazed or blinded. He might have been born in the Eastern States for his quick-witted faculty and other strong qualities.

Maggie married an enterprising young groceryman. Dell overlived her sorrow, as healthy-toned childhood is apt to do. There was the companionship of the children; the ever welcome babies, school, play, and a simple kind of religion that made them truthful and upright. Still, Dell did not forget her beautiful mamma. The past was a series of slow-moving, pathetic pictures, in which she seemed to steal awesomely along; the present was glad, buoyant, full of interest and delight. Her life had been so solitary heretofore, shut out from those of her own age. And the Murrays were a merry lot. They squabbled, they teased and laughed at each other, but they were obliging, cheerful, light-hearted. Densie Murray had not been trained in the analytic or introspective school, and perhaps thought more of keeping their bodies clean and sound than of peering or prying into their souls or brains.

So four years had come and gone. Dell was so incorporated into the family that she used their name, and though some of the neighbors remembered her mother, they always called her Dell Murray. There was not a thought of any one claiming her now. She was a bright scholar, and Con had settled in his mind that she would study for a teacher. Her little money laid on interest, and would be a nice bit when she married.

For though Constantine Murray was fast becoming a successful business man, he was as simple at heart as when he first set foot in the new country. He had not begun to dream of being a rich man. He was fond of work, and his garden was a delight. Little had he dreamed of it being a tolerable gold mine.

CHAPTER III.

A BATTLE WITH DESTINY.

MANY things had tended to keep alive a sense of resentment with the Sherburnes. If Dell had proved a boy, her grandfather would have felt that he must be instituted in his rightful position. There were perplexities brought about by the war, some family anxieties, and the influence was all on the wrong side.

Miss Varick fanned the flame of resentment. She did not too cordially approve of her young stepmother and she was piqued that a man who had the opportunity of asking her hand in marriage should have preferred an unknown nobody. Mrs. Beaumanoir was extremely indignant, and did not hesitate to call Honora "that English adventuress." Aunt Aurelia was of the old aristocratic school, a great stickler for good blood, and she esteemed it a positive disgrace. Still she pitied rather than blamed "poor infatuated Edward."

Yet the extreme bitterness of feeling had begun to abate a little when they were shocked to the innermost soul by the tidings of his sudden death. In a certain sense they felt the wife had been the cause.

"If there *could* be some change made in that unfortunate will," Mr. Sherburne groaned to his sister. "Of course father never dreamed of such a contingency. But he might have trusted me to do what was right."

However, there was the unlucky clause—"to him and his heirs, forever." And the will was on record.

"And there is Leonard. The eldest grandson ought to take Sherburne House and the name," said Miss Aurelia. "Oh poor, misguided Ned!"

"*She* has no right here at all," announced Mrs. Beaumanoir. "And while father lives, no one can come in. Of course the child may die, and that will end it. If she never comes into possession the mother will have no claim. Oh, how could Edward have been so blind!"

The Beaumanoir estate joined Sherburne House. There were five bright, attractive children. Mrs. Lepage was settled in Baltimore, but made frequent visits at home, and of her four children the two eldest were promising boys. Mrs. Stanwood, the youngest daughter, spent much of her time at Sherburne House. Mr. Sherburne was exceedingly fond of his grandchildren, but Miss Aurelia, who was reckoned to have a fine head for business, relieved him of many cares, as his health had grown rather precarious. Indeed, during the winter of four years previous, he had shown some rather alarming symptoms, and in March he had started for the Pacific coast with the Stanwoods.

Honora's letter had come, and been laid aside for re-mailing. Then Mrs. Beaumanoir in hunting up some important papers, had unwittingly given it a little tip and sent it down a crack into a compartment rarely used. Miss Aurelia took up another New York letter of slight importance, unaware there had been two. And there the letter was to slumber securely.

At first Mr. Sherburne seemed quite his olden self on his return. There was a vague sort of misgiving in his mind that some inquiries ought to be instituted concerning Edward's child. His obstinate faith that something ought to be done to change the will clung to him, although he had been assured that only the child's death while a minor could render it nugatory. But springs came and autumns vanished, until, one day, the dread destroyer, paralysis, laid his heavy hand on the now rather delicate frame, and for six months or more it was but a death in life. His sister nursed him devotedly,

his children and grandchildren were tender and assiduous until the end.

Mr. Whittingham, the family adviser, came to look over the important papers. The bulk of Mr. Sherburne's own property was divided between his sister and Leonard Beaumanoir, but there were remembrances to every one. And now the letter was exhumed from its hiding-place and perused with something like consternation. Certainly it had never been opened before.

What was to be done? Until the truth was evolved about Edward's child there could be no settlement of the estate. Her right was incontrovertible.

Mr. and Mrs. Lepage were just going abroad, and proposed to ascertain the truth of the marriage and the birth of the child, before any steps nearer home were taken. Indeed, she and Mrs. Beaumanoir had a confident feeling that a thorough examination would reveal some trickery or debatable link. The letter might be that of a skilful adventuress, since it had not been followed up by any notification of the death.

But the Lepages found a most orthodox marriage. They also unearthed the simple life in a London suburb, the births of two children and the death, the after life of Mrs. Sherburne, her failing health, and her American voyage. There was no weak or disreputable link.

"I will send to New York," proposed Mr. Whittingham, "and get some one to make a few quiet inquiries about these Murrys. But the poorer classes move about so continually that it may be difficult to trace them."

Miss Aurelia sighed. She was too much of a Christian to hope deliberately that the child was dead. But she shrank instinctively from the low associations and alien blood that must hereafter be grafted upon their pure stock. And she *did* want her favorite Leonard Beaumanoir to be the next master in this fine old house.

When the word came there could be no further excuse for delay; Mrs. Sherburne had died four years earlier. Her little girl was still with the Murrays. Of course she must be brought home and educated for her station. "And how can I endure her here!" groaned Miss Aurelia.

"There is another resource—sending her to some nice school," suggested the lawyer.

"But she will be such an utter barbarian after years of low Irish associations! No, we may as well face the bitter trial at once, and civilize her as speedily as possible," was the reply.

So it was decided that Miss Sherburne and Mr. Whittingham should proceed forthwith to New York, and learn how well the case could be authenticated.

The result of the interview the reader knows. But what pen can do justice to Miss Sherburne's indignant disgust as they two took their places again in the *coupé*.

"That child!" The words choked her. "That wild-Indian-looking thing who dances for the amusement of a crowd of street boys! I saw her as she turned her impudent eyes toward the *coupé*; and that great shock of red hair, that squat, ungainly figure. She never *can* be Edward's child!"

"But *they* certainly would have no object in putting forth a pretender," interposed the lawyer.

"But she—the mother—might. Edward sent a picture of his wife when he confessed the marriage, but it might have flattered her. He thought her so beautiful, poor misguided boy! And Ned was handsome enough. She *cannot* be his child. I will not believe it until the papers are forthcoming. Oh, my friend, use your utmost efforts to prevent a deception. To have that thing foisted upon the family!"

Mr. Whittingham sympathized keenly with the Sherburnes. He had somehow idealized Edward's child, and

felt disappointed. But he was touched with the sympathy and attention the Murrays had paid to the dying woman and her child.

They found Mrs. Warden, who told her story with a kind of indignant passion. She recapitulated the feverish waiting, the dread of leaving her child, the earnest desire to meet her husband's people, the sweetness and refinement of her nature, and the kindness of the Murrays.

"We shall reward them for all their trouble," returned the lady haughtily.

"You never can reward them!" cried warm-hearted Maggie. "No money can do it. Many a one would have sent the child to some charitable institution as soon as the little money was gone, but my brother would have cut off his right arm sooner than touch a penny of it."

"An underbred woman," declared Miss Sherburne. "Now, Mrs. Murray *does* seem to understand her place. It is a pity the child should have been under such influences, if she *should* prove my nephew's daughter. But I must be thoroughly convinced."

"Yes, yes, indeed," responded Mr. Whittingham, though he had very little fear of the result.

The interview with Mr. Murray established one fact, that they were in no degree desirous of parting with Lyndell. Indeed, he begged she might be left with them until autumn at least.

"That will be quite impossible, if she is proved to be a Sherburne. She must be brought up as befits her station," said the lady decisively.

Con Murray's bright face shadowed a little.

"It'll be hard for her," he said, in his simple way. "She's so fond of the children. And they'll miss her. Oh, ma'am, I could almost wish that she didn't belong to any one and that we might keep her always."

"I should think you had enough mouths to feed, without her, my good man," was the reply.

"But there would always be enough. And I am not quite a poor man, either. You don't think, ma'am," awkwardly twisting the button of his coat, "that you could spare her a month or two to get a little used to the idea? You see she's known no other real home for so long," and his tone sank to persuasive pleading.

"The idea of being an heiress will compensate her," said the lady, with some bitterness.

"Oh, you are quite wrong there, ma'am. That wouldn't touch her at all."

"Mr. Murray, I must warn you not to pin your faith on such theories of simplicity. When she comes to understand the truth, you will find her ready enough to accept the good things of prosperity. Do not count on any great remembrance from her—children's gratitude is proverbially short-lived. I wish we *could* relinquish her to you, but we are prepared to do our full duty in the case, if she really belongs to us, which cannot be told until the papers are produced. Be here as early as you can, to-morrow. We are anxious to get through as soon as possible."

The tone was dry and hard, with a certain flavor of unwillingness to accept the facts.

"Yes," said Con, with a great ache at his heart. Oh, how could they give warm-hearted, quick-tempered, generous Dell into such hands!

Mr. Whittingham followed him through the long hall and down the stairs, endeavoring, in an amiable way, to soften the impression the asperity of his companion had made. He knew the hopes and ambitions of the Sherburnes so well, and the intensity of their disappointment. If the child were only pretty or winsome!

Con returned with a heavy heart. The children had gone down to the Park. Con, Densie, and the baby sat

under the old apple-tree, the baby crowing gleefully while they "talked it over." Densie's motherly heart ached for poor Dell.

But the evening was delightful. They always sang hymns, and more than one passer-by stopped to listen. Con kissed Dell almost lightly, he was so afraid of showing his coming grief.

The children went off to school the next morning as usual, except that Dell was really impatient, as if there was safety in getting away.

Con and Mr. Cranston went down with the box of papers. Miss Sherburne would fain have dismissed them immediately, but Mr. Whittingham evinced a proper respect for their rights in the matter.

Alas! If Miss Sherburne had a hope it was doomed to speedy extinguishment. There was the marriage certificate, Lyndell's birth record, and a christening card. Letters, some of Edward's own trinkets, and the very watch Aunt Aurelia had given him. There was also a sealed packet inscribed: "To my dear daughter, Honora Lyndell Sherburne, from her mother. To be given her on her fifteenth birthday."

Mr. Whittingham went carefully over the papers. There could be no further question. The facts which they had already gleaned were substantiated. Honora Lyndell was her father's heiress and sole mistress of Sherburne House.

Miss Aurelia Sherburne swallowed her bitter draught bravely, but with a kind of passionate protest on behalf of Leonard Beaumanoir. She had hoped against hope, but she could not go against law and proof.

"Nothing remains then but to take the child to her proper home," she declared incisively. "And this worthy man must be reimbursed for the expense he so kindly assumed. Of course, we should have relieved you at once if that unfortunate letter had not been mislaid."

"I shall take no gift or payment," returned Con Murray, with so large and gracious a dignity that Miss Sherburne flushed with a sense of shame. For, certainly, here was the higher birthright of a gentleman, the fine, honorable soul. Something gave her conscience a twinge. Under any other circumstances she would have done justice to his manliness. "The child has always been welcome to our love and care, just as the mother was. No one, unless he had the heart of a stone, could have left her to die friendless and forlorn. All that we have done she and the child are quite welcome to, and I am willing to trust to Dell's gratitude in the years to come."

Miss Sherburne bit her lip with a sense of discomfiture. She hated to feel that any one connected with her family should remain under any sense of obligation to the Murrays. Not that she had any faith in Dell's lasting gratitude. She considered herself an excellent judge of human nature, and she was quite sure the girl had a stolid, ungracious temperament, quite deficient in the finer qualities that generations of culture and breeding develop.

Mr. Whittingham took him aside to consult about arrangements. It was their intention to start homeward as soon as possible. And they had decided that the child must have a suitable wardrobe.

"If you could only allow her to remain until the end of the school term," besought her foster-father.

"It is quite impossible. No doubt she will have to unlearn much of what she has acquired," said Miss Sherburne decisively. "Let me see—I will come at two, and we can devote the afternoon to shopping. We must start to-morrow morning."

"You see the parting had much better come at once," interposed Mr. Whittingham gently. "Living it over will not soften it any."

"I will tell her—" and Con turned away, winking

his blue eyes hard. "You see—we haven't thought of any such thing."

"Children's memories are short-lived, and their preferences a matter of present enjoyment. It will be better for her to forget the past as soon as possible. She is to be Miss Sherburne of Sherburne House, one of the finest old estates in Virginia, and her future life will be altogether different. You must see that all connection between you and her had better cease at once. She must adapt herself to an entirely new order of things. Do not make it any harder for her by your ill-judged sympathy and misplaced indulgence."

Miss Sherburne was growing irritable. That this man could not see the superiority of the future awaiting the child, positively angered her.

Con Murray was not the man to say hard things to a woman, but he glanced steadily into the austere eyes. To think of warm, eager, impetuous Dell falling into such pitiless hands!

"We will come for her at two. Try and have no scenes. I detest ungovernable children."

Con bowed himself out, and turned his steps homeward. Cranston had left, on the transference of the papers.

Densie was busy with the dinner. A woman was washing in the shed and crooning an Irish ditty. Densie lifted her eyes in amazement.

"O Con!" she cried. His face told her all.

"She's a hard one, Densie. She'll never love the poor colleen. It's a thousand pities there is any money. But there's a grand estate, and her own mother, poor shut-out lamb, was all right. She belongs to them. The law would not let us keep her, no matter how willing we were. But how they will ever take her——"

"Heaven send us help!" Then Densie dropped into a chair, and cried over Laddie's curly pate.

"How we'll ever make her understand—" and Con sat down on the doorstep. "But the lawyer explained it all to me. There's lots of relatives too, three own aunts, her father's sisters, and cousins; and this is a great aunt who lives at Sherburne House, and that is all Dell's besides ever so much money. It's what her mother brought her here for, and we oughtn't to feel so rebellious. For, after all, money's a good thing," added Con retrospectively.

"A slip of a lass like that!" exclaimed Densie in amazement.

"And the old lady's right. She must be educated to fill the place in the world that the good God has allotted to her. But if they could have forgiven the poor young people and brought them home, and had Dell born in her own house! And I wish it was kinder hands she was like to fall into."

Densie wiped her eyes.

"Ah, the poor dear! She's hardly had a cross word. I've often noticed," said Densie sagely, "that if you leave a colleen alone to think a bit, it's better than flying out at them with your own temper in a flame. And whatever will she do without Tessy! They're like two peas in a pod. And all the babies to love! And Con, dear, when I have been tried with her, the poor mother's dying face has come back to me, and I'd think—what if I was under the sod and *she* here mothering my little flock? and God will bear witness that I did only what I would be willing to have done to mine. And they'll know nothing about the child's mother."

"They all hate her. They haven't the right of the story, I'm sure. I don't believe she inveigled the young fellow over the sea to marry her. He was hot for himself, no doubt. So there'll be no love lost on the child, and that's what stabs me to the quick. To have the

poor thing hungering for a bit of love and the sweetness of kisses, and then be offered a stone!"

"Poor little lass!" sobbed Densie.

"There, there," said Con unsteadily. "I'll go out and meet them coming home. Maybe the news'll sound less cruel in the bright, sunshiny streets, with the others around. And, Densie—you're that soft-hearted ——"

"Who else isn't lacking in soft-heartedness?"

Con turned two or three corners. There was a merry flock all in a huddle—Murray's Row, and some rows besides—talking, laughing, catching an arm or hand, giving a "last tag" and starting off like a deer. Tessy caught sight of him and bounded onward, snatching at his hand. Dell walked gravely and asked a fateful question with her eyes, and, oh! received a fateful answer without a word.

She stood quite still. The warmth all went out of the sunshine. Con passed his arm over her shoulder and impelled her along. At the gate she said:

"They will not let me stay?"

"Dell, dear—*alanna*—you're a great heiress and a lady. It's just as your poor sweet mother said. You could buy a palace—only, don't you remember what the good St. Paul said about children being under teachers and masters? You're to have a beautiful home in Virginia, and flocks and herds and I don't know what all."—trying to laugh. "And now you must go and learn how to be a lady, so that when you are grown up you can take care of it and prove a blessing to your friends, a sweet, tender, gracious woman, such as your own mamma would have been."

"I do not want it," returned Dell, with sharp, short decisiveness that somehow suggested Miss Sherburne. "I do not want to be a lady! If they wouldn't have mamma, they needn't have me."

"But, dear, you see—if your father was alive he

would go at once. His father is dead, and in the natural course of events the property comes to him. Failing in that, to his child. That is the law of the land. There cannot be any evading it. And the laws are made so that one person cannot wrong another without committing a crime."

"I shall not go. They can keep it—and the money and everything!" Her heart swelled, and she shut her lips firmly.

Was there some latent likeness to Miss Sherburne, that inheritance we call family resemblance? And yet she *was* so different with her round face, that could be so laughing and merry.

"Run along, children," he said. Then he drew Dell down the garden path. But the simple fellow was at his wits' end.

The children hurried to their mother and questioned eagerly. Was it true that those people were going to take Dell away?

"You see," continued Con, "they cannot keep it. The law will not let them. The intent of the law is that no one shall deprive another of what is rightfully his own by inheritance. And you are a minor, so you have guardians to direct you. In eight years you will be a woman; then your guardians transfer everything to you. You can do what you like, in reason. You can make a beautiful home and ask us all to visit you. You and Tessy may be great friends then. But while Tessy is so young we think it right and proper for her to obey us, and so it is proper for you to obey whoever will be your guardian. And you have aunts and cousins in Virginia."

"Why did they not send before?" queried Dell with unnatural gravity.

"Your mother's letter was mislaid. Your grandfather was traveling for his health, and the letter was laid by, slipped away, and was not found until after his death.

He would have sent for you at once—he would have loved you as I do.”

“Let us go in—” they were walking back then. Somehow, Dell felt safer with them all around her.

“Hallo!” cried Con, junior. “You are very swell! It isn’t the king’s son exactly, but we’ve had the princess in disguise and we will be famous.”

“I shall never be a princess. I am going to stay here with you all. I don’t want the money, nor the palace, nor the hateful old aunt——”

Con sat down in despair, and began to help the children.

“You have it already,” he said, returning to the attack, rather disheartened. “You simply can’t get rid of it. It is this chimney-corner that has been the mistake. The princess happened to knock at the cottage door one dark, stormy night, and we took her in and kept her until her people came. And now she is going back to her kingdom to learn how to manage it, how to do the most good with her fortune, how to make people happy. Dell, my little darling, God knows how dear you are to us all, but we have not the first or best right. Mamma and I would break our promise to your dead mother if we interfered. And now you must do your duty, bravely, just as she would wish. It must not be said that we set you up against your own blood kin.”

Densie glanced up furtively. There was an ominous lowering of the brows and contraction of the lips as the girl sat with her untasted dinner before her. Young Con asked a question, and his father was glad to answer it and explain some of the points he had gone over.

“Dell,” said Con, “I’d give anything if it was I. Can’t we change places? Are you quite sure there isn’t a mistake?” and the boy looked up with a shrewd twinkle.

“Oh, I wish you could, I wish you could!” Then

there was a wild, pathetic cry that pierced their hearts, and Dell was in mamma Murray's arms, sobbing tempestuously. "I can't go! I hate that woman. And she doesn't want me, I can feel it. Oh, you *will* keep me!"

Densie gave way at that, and some of the true Irish vehemence came to the surface. Con rose and took the girl in his arms, patted her cheek, and kissed down amid the passionate tears.

"Mavourneen, you will break all our hearts! It's sore hard for us to lose you, but they will think we have put you up to be rebellious and obstinate, and said bitter things against them. Come, will you not be brave and bear your corner of the heavy burden? I can't keep you, because you have kinsfolk to whom your mother desired you to go. See here—it is just as if your father bequeathed you to them, and fathers have the right. What if some man should come and take Tessy there; the law would say at once—'Give her back to her father. You have no rights.' And so I can protect her. But for this any one might take you and make a little slave of you. So you see the law is our friend, after all. And you'll like them better when you come to know them. There are cousins who will welcome you, and you will have so many new things to learn. My darling, you are going to be a brave girl."

"Children," said Mrs. Murray to the anxious throng who had left half their dinners on their plates, "children, it's school time. Kiss Dell, and run off—she'll be here to-night, father?"

"Yes." Mr. Murray meant to fight for that.

Then Densie took Dell upstairs, brushed her soft hair and tied it with her best blue ribbon, washed her tear-stained face, talking all the while in a soft persuasive voice, that now and then halted lamely over a sob; explaining to her that they were to shop this afternoon, and

she would be pleased with the new dresses, and that it would be her duty to learn the true purpose of the wealth God was bestowing upon her. "For it could not have come if God had not willed it. And there's a rugged way to a good many of the best things of life."

Then Densie wondered, rather ruefully, if money was among the best things.

The carriage rolled up to the door, Mr. Whittingham alighted alone.

"It's come powerfully hard on the child," said Con Murray. "The suddenness of the thing stuns her. I hope you'll be patient till she gets settled in the new traces. She's never known any want of love, and though she's hot-tempered at times, she has a big heart and a quick, true conscience. I've promised she should come back for the night. It is the only favor I ask of you. By morning she will have accepted some of the facts so hard now to understand."

"An excellent idea," cordially acquiesced Mr. Whittingham. "Miss Sherburne is very nervous and—and upset, I may say. She is a little peculiar, and her nephew's unlucky marriage was a great blow to them all; though, if he had lived, it would have been forgiven. A fine fellow he was, too. I wish the child could have looked like him—it would have softened their hearts, so to speak. It has been a sad matter all around. And we owe you a debt of gratitude."

Dell came down, clinging to Densie's arm; Con kissed her and whispered, "Be brave for all our sakes."

CHAPTER IV.

HOW DELL FOUGHT IT OUT.

MR. WHITTINGHAM led Dell out to the carriage. She glanced around with a terrified look, as if even now she was meditating an escape. Miss Sherburne nodded coldly. The flushed and swollen face and red eyes disgusted her, aroused afresh the antagonism in her soul toward the spectacle of the dancing girl. She could see her in her tawdry drapery, with the motley crew around her. It was coarse, indecent!

She found just these coarse, commonplace lines in the girl's face. There was no Sherburne about it. Perhaps Dell had never looked so unlovely in her life. One kind, tender word would have broken down the barriers and transfigured the countenance. Miss Sherburne went over it critically, her aversion increasing every minute. People who measure, weigh, and define at a first glance take what is present at the moment, and are generally too narrow and implacable to admit a mistake afterward.

Certainly Dell was not amiable or gracious. She evinced no interest in the attire chosen for her. Miss Sherburne was slow and fastidious. Dell grew weary of being measured and fitted. Nothing seemed especially becoming.

"The child is hopelessly stout," she said in despair. "You can make nothing of such a figure."

"She is at the most trying age," was the suave reply. "In a year or two one will hardly recognize her."

Miss Sherburne groaned inwardly over the gloves, boots and daintily cut slippers, and would have found a

satisfaction in pinching her, but Dell would not be pinched. It was extremely trying.

Once she stood a little apart. Mr. Whittingham was touched by her utter desolation.

"It is tiresome business," he said.

Dell's lips quivered. Then one large tear rolled down her cheek.

"My dear child!" Mr. Whittingham's sympathies were keenly touched. "Let us walk about a little while Miss Sherburne is busy."

Dell wiped her eyes and turned redder than before. But she took a quick step forward.

"It is very hard for you," and he was surprised at the sudden accession of kindness he experienced. "It will be a great change, and it has come so unexpectedly. I can see that the Murrays are warm-hearted people. We owe them a great deal for their care of you."

"Yes, you do," said Dell, with very honest frankness.

"And I hope you will presently come to feel at home among your new relatives. It will take time." After a pause, in which she evinced no tendency to reply, he added, "Perhaps you would like to buy some little gift or something."

"I did not bring my money," returned Dell briefly.

"My dear child, you will have plenty."

"Not of hers?" indicating Miss Sherburne with a gesture of her head.

"Oh, no; of your very own. Let me be your banker."

"Did all the clothes and things come out of *my* money?"

"Of course."

Then Dell gave a bright, quick smile that looked like a rift of sun through lowering clouds.

"Are you to be my guardian?" she asked with a touch of interest that humanized her at once.

"Probably ; I am executor—trustee. There will be some new arrangements. You need not hesitate to ask me anything—in reason," and he gave a soft, dry smile. There was a kindliness he had not observed before. He had a vague realization of how alone she would stand at Sherburne, and of the love and companionship she would leave behind.

"The money would have been my own papa's?" she ventured hesitatingly.

"Yes. And it came from his grandfather, who loved him devotedly."

"I am glad of that." There was a great lump in Dell's throat. She should always feel kindly toward him because he had loved her father.

"Well, can I do anything to gratify you?" They walked down a counter of fancy articles. Dell was considering.

"If you *are* my guardian, there is one thing I think I would like to have done. Mamma left a little money—it is in the bank for me. But I shall not need it. And as it never belonged to any one else, I would like Tessy Murray to have it."

Her eyes glistened in tears, and she turned away a little. Mr. Whittingham was profoundly touched by the simple, unselfish nobleness. To give away this especial sum had a flavor of delicacy that one would not look for in an untrained child.

"Yes, I will see about it," he said. "And now—will you not buy something?"

Dell considered.

"I should like a ring for Tessy. One of the girls at school has an amethyst. And—a seal ring for Con. I can't just think of anything else."

"You were very happy with the Murrays? I hope you will like Sherburne House. Of course you will when you are grown—a young lady."

"I never shall, never!" She uttered this with a strange solemnity.

They came to the jewel counter, and looked at the rings. Dell selected two.

"Will you tell me if they are too costly," said she, with a certain embarrassed hesitation.

"No, you have chosen very judiciously."

She smiled again. He became aware then that her eyes were really fine. And the curious curling lashes had an almost dazzling effect.

She took her two little boxes with a thrill of pleasure. Then they sauntered around until they came in sight of Miss Sherburne. She had finished Dell's shopping, but she had some few errands yet to undertake.

Mr. Whittingham explained that he had promised to return the child to the Murrays for this last night, as no doubt she would be only a trouble at the hotel, and tire Miss Sherburne.

"I dare say she would be an annoyance," and the poor lady looked worried to death now. "She is the most stolid and uninteresting child I ever met. How I am to endure her until she does get humanized I cannot divine. Yes, I think your plan is best. There will be the packing, and I should like a comfortable night's sleep. Suppose you take her back and come for me at Tiffany's?"

A cold farewell passed between Dell and Miss Sherburne, with strict injunctions not to delay them in the morning.

Mr. Whittingham was totally unused to childhood. He cast about to see if there was any comfort he could give.

"Will Miss Sherburne—" how should Dell put the question? "Must I live with her?"

"She has taken charge of Sherburne House since your grandmother died. Your father was then only

a little boy. And your cousins, the Beaumanoirs, are very fond of her. Some of your cousins are always there."

Dell had the vaguest idea of Sherburne House. But if it had been Paradise, in her present state of mind, anything else would have been preferred.

"You must endeavor to make yourself at home and be happy."

Dell turned away. Her eyes were full of tears. And in a few moments they reached Murray's Row. Aunt Maggie was there with her baby, to hear the result of the morning. And she declared Dell one of the luckiest of girls.

Con and Tessy went wild over their rings. They almost envied her. Oh, did they realize what it would be to live with that dreadful woman! Her head throbbed, her brain and heart were on fire, and her eyes ached with their overflow of tears.

"Oh, mavourneen," said Densie, "you'll break my heart entirely with your sad face. When the Lord sends good fortune to any one—a little girl like you—she ought to be grateful. You do not know how full the world is of nice people, but you must not shut your eyes and refuse their kindness. God will keep you, my dear, and help you over the rough places. Some day you will come back and visit us, and we'll both smile over the trials of this time."

Dell went away by herself under the old apple-tree. Did they really mind so little about her leaving them? They would not have to live with dreadful Miss Sherburne. She felt as if she could fly to the ends of the earth. She looked up over the hilly outline of the country beyond. What if she ran away?

The neighbors kept coming in, and all was a kind of confused jumble that angered poor, nervous Dell, with every pulse strained to the uttermost. Then

Densie put her to bed, with some sweet kisses. She wanted to cry over her, but, with a great effort, refrained.

"You must think that to-night your sweet mother up in heaven is glad to have her little girl come into her very own fortune, and that she, above all others, hopes to have you grow up into a nice, sweet, noble woman. You'll think of us often, and know that we think of you. And you'll write and let us know about yourself. There, dear, don't cry any more. The good God will be there as well as here."

She tossed and tumbled in a strange passion of restlessness. Everywhere Miss Sherburne's cold eyes seemed to follow her. To live with them, to have them watch one, judge one, order one—Dell was half crazy with the thought. She fell into a disturbed slumber, still hunted about by her enemy.

"Poor colleen," said Con Murray, pityingly. "I wish it was all over."

Dell woke up in the grey dawn of the summer morning. There was a wild effort of some kind in her mind, a desire to elude some one. What had happened to her? She sat up in the bed and tried to remember. Tessy was asleep by her side.

Ah, yes! To-day she was going to that hateful woman. Must she? Last night a wild idea of running away occurred to her. What if she did? What if she went somewhere and stayed—hid herself quite away for awhile, and convinced them all that she would not go to Virginia. Some one would take her in, and they would go their way in disgust and be willing to leave her to the Murrays.

She did not stop to consider, but crept softly out of bed, and hurried on her clothes. There was some money in a little box she was saving up for Fourth of July festivities. She tied it up in the corner of her

handkerchief. She did not need to take any clothes—she would come back in a week at the latest. With her boots in her hand she crept softly downstairs. How dark it was in the hall! She unbolted the door cautiously. It was so strange and solemn, with a few stars still visible, but long bright rays in the east, that seemed to have a suggestion of Christmas about them. The birds were singing soft songs to one another. She commended herself to the care of God, though there came a little prick of conscience. Then she sat down and put on her boots. Nero came and thrust his cold nose against her cheek.

“Good Nero,” she whispered. “Stay here and watch the house.” Then she walked slowly down to the old apple-tree, considering. She must go up above Harlem, in some of the old country-places. She might be taken in to tend a baby—she could wash dishes and do a nice bit of housekeeping.

A little sound had disturbed Con Murray. Did the children want anything? Perhaps it was poor Dell crying. He glanced in. Why—where was she? Then he hurried on his clothes, and picked his way as lightly over the stairs as she had done a few moments before.

The door was unbolted. Nero was not on the mat. Then he was quite sure, as he stood there uncertainly, that he heard a voice.

“Nero! Nero!” he called.

Nero wagged his tail, but clung close to Dell.

“Go back! go back!” she cried in affright.

It was growing lighter every moment. Did he see a small figure down by the gate? With a stride or two he was beside her. She looked up with large, solemn, entreating eyes, her face like marble in the pale light. He clasped her in his arms, and she shook like an aspen.

"Dell, my darling." He kissed her cold face. He drew her to the old seat under the apple-tree. "Surely you were not going to steal away like a thief or a criminal! I promised for you, if you were allowed to come back last night. You would have made me guilty of double dealing."

"But—you would not have known. Yes, I was going away—for a little while. And when those people had gone back to Virginia I meant to return. They would find it was better to let me stay with you."

"O Dell, would you have brought that terrible anxiety upon Mamma Murray and me?" said the soft, reproachful voice. "We must have searched at once for you, and have moved heaven and earth to find you."

"But—boys run away—and I *can't* go with them."

Con Murray pressed the throbbing figure to his great strong, warm heart. The sparrows were chirping to one another, the robins were singing exultantly. The wind stirred the leaves softly and shook out an indescribably dewy fragrance; the dim grey was melting into blue, and long rays of gold were shooting up with tremulous beauty that faded, and renewed itself in a host of brilliant colors and shapes.

Con Murray was not much of a hand at preaching. He could live out such truths as honor, honesty, and kindness; he could see their need of application to other souls, but the formula of words did not come easy. How to make courage and endurance a light to guide this shrinking, protesting soul, he did not know.

He kissed her cold face, and held her tightly in his arms. Ah, how beautiful God's world was! How generously everything was given! Why should one try to narrow it, to go beyond and defraud another? Why were not love and good will free as the sunshine, when Christ himself had died that this might be!

"Dell,"—softly and with great tenderness,—“you

will go like a brave girl. When any clear duty is given us it is a shame to shirk it. Only your miserable coward goes skulking along behind fences instead of marching out in the open road. God has given the answer to your parents' wishes, and he has set something hard for you to do—to go into a strange, unfriendly country. Oh, my little Dell, we promised your mother to do the best we could for you, and now do not shame our endeavor! Come back to bed, and cuddle up warm and think it over. I know you will come out on the right side."

He picked her up in his arms and carried her to the wide porch, abloom with honeysuckle and sweet as Eden. Years afterward it came back to her.

"Dell, promise me."

"Yes," answered Dell, with a shivering sigh.

"I'll trust your promise to the uttermost. Now go and roll yourself in a blanket and get warm, or you will be ill."

Then he kissed her fondly. There was the making of a splendid woman in her if Miss Sherburne would not trim and train too sharply.

Dell lay and trembled in every fibre with nervous exhaustion. Densie kept the children so still that she and Tessy never stirred until the savory fragrance of breakfast greeted them. Had she been dreaming?

"And you're here with your clothes on," cried Tessy. "Sure, you've been and dressed yourself in your sleep."

Then Dell knew it was not a dream.

The carriage was to come at eight. Con had left a good-bye for her. The children hated to have her go, yet the wonderful happening stirred them almost with envy. What the journey would be like, what she would write to them, and how soon she would visit them seemed the important points. And when she was a woman grown she could do quite as she liked.

Miss Sherburne would have been horrified at the throng of people around the house ; the kissing and the demonstrations. Granny McCray brought an old shoe to throw after her, and declared it was almost " loike a weddin'." Densie gave her one clasp of heartbreaking tenderness. Then Dell stepped into the carriage, and everything blurred before her eyes.

Mr. Whittingham had left an envelope directed to Mr. Constantine Murray in Miss Sherburne's hand. He had used his strongest powers of persuasion to induce her to let the matter of Dell's care stand at present, and not attempt any recompense. But her haughty pride would not brook the sense of obligation. She enclosed a check that made ample remuneration for the four years.

Con flushed with indignation as he read the note. She desired all communication between Miss Lyndell Sherburne and the Murrays to cease. Her associations would be so widely different that she desired to efface as soon as possible all interest and reference to the past four years. He would see such a step was absolutely necessary, when he considered Miss Sherburne's future, that really lay in a different world.

" Oh, how can she be so cruel ! " cried Con, wounded to the soul. " To give her the very first lesson in ingratitude and indifference ! But she won't win Dell that way. The child is honest and loyal, and will only hate such strictures. And there must be some good in the Sherburne blood when the young husband kept to his wife and poverty. Some men would have returned to the feasts of Egypt. And I have a feeling that some day the child will come back to us with her heart warm and fond as now."

The children were first heartbroken, then angry. Never to hear from their own dear Dell ! Never to see her again !

"She's a mean, hateful, selfish, stuck-up old maid," cried Con impetuously. "And Tess, if you're an old maid, you shall never come in my house or have anything to do with my children!"

"I'm sure I don't want to be one," sobbed Tessy at this dire threat. "I'm going to be just like my own sweet mamma, and have seven children of my very own. So, there now, Con!" and Tessy kissed her ring, which was to be a great comfort to her.

But the house seemed just as if there had been a death. Con tore his check in pieces and returned it to Miss Sherburne without a word. The whole neighborhood mourned her loss, and yet they could not but rejoice in her good fortune. Mrs. Edson, whose baby she had cared for, and with whom she had gone to the *matinée*, came down to hear the whole strange adventure.

"It is like a page out of a fairy story," she said with a smile. "And I am sure she deserved it. I hope it won't spoil her. She has such a warm, generous heart, and is so utterly honest! I always thought she was your very own, Mrs. Murray."

"I could wish she had been," replied motherly Densie. "And yet we couldn't have done for her as her people will. Heaven knows I hope it will be all for the best."

"And I hope she will not prove ungrateful to the people who have been so good to her! She ought to keep a warm corner in her heart for you, always."

"That she will," said Mrs. Murray.

And yet it would be hard to explain why they could never hear. Densie shed many sad tears over Miss Sherburne's edict.

CHAPTER V.

MUST THIS BE HOME?

MR. WHITTINGHAM paused at the hotel to take up Miss Sherburne, a traveling satchel and a parcel or two, the trunk having gone by express. They crossed the ferry and entered a drawing-room car. Mr. Whittingham seated Dell, bought her a package of candy, and an illustrated paper, but both lay undisturbed in her lap. A chill, despairing lethargy had crept over her. She did not want to cry, she seemed to have no power for anything ; as if a terrible storm had swept over her, leaving her bruised and maimed, flung on some unfriendly coast. There was a dull ache in every nerve.

It was a misfortune that these two people, destined to be such close companions, and united by ties of relationship, should begin by a violent dislike. Miss Sherburne had by this time reached her threescore years. She was tall, erect, and not only had an imposing figure, but an authoritative one. Her complexion was fine and very little wrinkled, with usually a soft, pink tint in the cheeks. Her face was a rather long oval, and a habit of dignity kept her from softening into a double chin or relaxing lines about the mouth. Her hair was a light brown, abundant, and very little touched by silver. Her eyes had been a deep, violet-blue, but now had come to have the colder steel lights. Ordinarily, she would be called a still handsome woman. Now she was suffering from a keen disappointment, nervous, anxious days and sleepless nights. Her whole soul was in a protest against this girl they were forced to accept, and

whom she did not believe in her soul was a true Sherburne. She obstinately clung to a feeling that somewhere a deception would be unearthed. Then she felt indignant that Dell should not be overwhelmed with delight at her new prospects, and positively vexed that she was so plain, with no distinguishing marks of her good birth and old family characteristics; that her life should have been cast among Irish immigrants until she had no higher ambition than they.

Now and then Dell caught sight of the cold, critical face. She felt that Miss Sherburne despised her, that every movement was in some way displeasing, that she was being unjustly judged. It filled her with a secret indignation, it led her to adopt a rigorous system of retaliatory repression. Miss Sherburne should know nothing of what was going on in her inmost soul.

Yet Dell's spontaneity and youthful longing for love would have led her to accept the merest olive-branch in the beginning. A wiser woman could have found the way to her heart and disarmed all her bitter prejudices. But the journey settled the distance between them effectually.

Miss Sherburne was trying, with what she meant for religious resignation, to bring her mind to an acceptance of the position and its duties. A clumsy, overgrown, unhandsome girl, whose delight was in dancing to a parcel of Irish children in full view of a public street, could have no proper sense of pride or dignity. Her natural affinities must be low. She must be held with a tight rein, or she would be continually demolishing the fences of propriety. She could not be allowed the least indulgence, or her barbarian habits would break out into license. How to train her to a proper understanding of her position, how to teach her respect, refinement—as for elegance, that would always be out of the question, She sighed at the magnitude of her task. There was no

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Yet Dell's spontaneity and youthful longing for love would have led her to accept the merest olive-branch in the beginning. A wiser woman could have found the way to her heart and disarmed all her bitter prejudices. But the journey settled the distance between them effectually.

Miss Sherburne was trying, with what she meant for religious resignation, to bring her mind to an acceptance of the position and its duties. A clumsy, overgrown, unhandsome girl, whose delight was in dancing to a parcel of Irish children in full view of a public street, could have no proper sense of pride or dignity. Her natural affinities must be low. She must be held with a tight rein, or she would be continually demolishing the fences of propriety. She could not be allowed the least indulgence, or her barbarian habits would break out into license. How to train her to a proper understanding of her position, how to teach her respect, refinement—as for elegance, that would always be out of the question. She sighed at the magnitude of her task. There was no

There was the usual group of idlers about. The search for the heir of Sherburne House could not be conducted in secrecy. Nearly every one had hoped young Beaumanoir would in some way be entitled to it. Of course young Master Edward's unlucky marriage had been gossiped about in its time, but his death was supposed to have extinguished his claim. Miss Sherburne's cheek burned with mortification, as this unstylish girl walked rather hesitatingly down the platform, and was handed into the family carriage.

"Glad to see you back again, missis," said the respectful colored servitor, with a grave air, a sort of family dignity and inheritance. "An' is dis Mas'r Edward's darter?"

"This is Miss Sherburne—yes. There are the checks, Ajax. One trunk and a parcel."

Ajax assisted the two ladies in, then turned to Mr. Whittingham.

"You will come over and take tea with us?" said Miss Sherburne.

"If you will be good enough to excuse me until to-morrow—I am quite sure there must be important letters awaiting me. You have settled upon Mr. Beaumanoir for the other guardian and trustee?"

"That is simply due to the family," she said, with a feeling that she was once more on her own ground.

"Yes. If you will be kind enough to ask him to meet me."

"To-morrow, then. Thanks for all your trouble."

The gentleman touched his hat with a fine courtesy and raised his eyes to Dell's face. Ajax mounted his seat and they drove out of the town, soon reaching a road that led through a plantation of young evergreens. There was a sparse settlement at the end of this, then a beautiful diversified country.

Dell uttered no word. A sort of mysterious terror

seized upon her, and her breath came in gasps. She was a prisoner being taken to some far fortress. A sudden passion overwhelmed her. She could see Mamma Murray sewing under the old apple-tree, Morna playing about, Laddie in the hammock.

"That is the drive to Beaumanoir," announced Miss Sherburne, indicating it with her head. "All this is Sherburne. I hope you will never disgrace so proud a heritage. You are Miss Sherburne, you will remember."

Dell shut her lips tightly. She was so near to crying at her own vision that the reaction gave her a half-sullen aspect.

Miss Sherburne lost her self-control. "You might at least evince ordinary gratitude and intelligence," she cried in a temper. "You have been rescued from a life coarse and common in the extreme, but I am afraid you are better suited to that than to this. It is a pity matters should turn out this way. You do not deserve it."

Dell's first impulse was to flame up in a passion. But she felt too sick and sore. She realized that she was considered an interloper, that the past and her dear Murrays were despised.

After a long wind through another row of evergreens they reached a beautiful open space. Waving fields, orchards, graperies, a profusion of blossoming shrubbery, a village of negro-quarters in the distance, tidily kept and clean with whitewash. Then the trees thinned, and on a slight elevation stood Sherburne House. The main building was a large, square, two-story edifice, and a little back of this was a wing stretching to the south, leaving a large porch in the break made by the angle. The façade proper had a wide piazza roof upheld by fluted columns, and a luxurious wealth of vines rioting everywhere.

They drove around to the side entrance, a little less imposing but equally beautiful. A dozen negroes of either sex, young and old, ran forward to greet their mistress with a most obsequious welcome.

"This is Miss Sherburne," she announced with a bitter sort of dignity, stung at the thought of her having a real right here.

"Praise de Lawd!" cried a bent old woman, with a strong, intelligent face. "I nebber 'spected to see Mars' Edward's little gal."

"That will do." Miss Sherburne turned Dell before her and entered the hall.

There was an eager rush, a cloud of golden hair and two outstretched arms.

"We are all here! We thought you would never get back. And did you bring——"

"Dear Aunt," said a pretty, graceful girl. "Why Frances, you are *too* demonstrative," and she kissed the traveler.

A stately, imposing woman followed, whose train rustled over the floor.

"Dear Aunt Aurelia," she exclaimed, "how tired you look! Girls do give your aunt a chance to enter the room. And is this—Edward's child?"

They reached the sitting-room in a huddle. Mrs. Beaumanoir placed her aunt in a chair, and hovered around. The elder took off her bonnet and mantle.

"Yes," said Miss Sherburne unwillingly. "There seems no *legal* reason for disbelieving it. This is your aunt Beaumanoir, Lyndell, and these are two of your cousins, Violet and Frances. You will find her—well, I am tired to death with the whole thing!" and Miss Sherburne seemed to relax utterly. Any other woman would have given way to angry tears.

Dell shrank back. Every pulse was in a quiver of indignation. Their manner placed her outside the pale

of welcome. The girls looked so lovely and refined in their soft white dresses and flowing ribbons, the elder tall and slim, the younger a golden-haired fairy. They resembled the rich people in the Park, between whom and the Murrays there was a great gulf.

"Do speak!" Miss Sherburne shook Dell by the arm. "I am tired of your taciturnity. Have you any intelligence at all? Here, Cassy, take her hat. Cato, the trunk goes up in my room. Perhaps we had all better go, now that I have found my breath. The air is dry and dusty, and we must be freshened up for supper. Did you get the room arranged, Cassy?"

"Yes'm," said the slim mulatto girl who had gathered up the stray articles.

"Well, Lyndell, you may go upstairs with her, and I will come in a moment or two with the keys."

"You may run up if you want to, Frances," said her mother.

"It is too, too heartrending," began Miss Sherburne and her tremulous voice attested her sincerity. "If we *could* have known in the beginning! Yet somehow I only half believe she is Edward's child. Of course they had all the papers, but they were in such order that it seemed almost like a plot. And four years with that Irish tribe!"

"Were they any connection?"

"O no! This Maggie Murray came over in the steamer with her, and they took her to Mr. Murray's house. I would give every dollar I possess if I could plant her in the Murray family so securely that she might never be able to disown that parentage. A great awkward creature, ignorant, disagreeable in the extreme. O my dear Laura, I shudder to think of the trial before us all. I had grown to almost idolize Edward's memory, and he was so dear to me. But now—all the old displeasure returns."

"You are tired and excited," said her niece sympathetically. "After you have had a cup of tea you will feel stronger. There, I shall curb my impatience until then."

They both rose and walked slowly up the broad staircase.

Frances had followed Cassy with some curiosity.

They crossed a large room that looked delightfully cool with its matted floor, white curtains and bed, and bamboo furniture. There was one adjoining, quite as deep, but not so wide, and with a single bed.

"This is to be your room at present," said Cassy, in a soft voice that sounded very grateful to Dell's shaken nerves. "Are you dreadfully tired?"

"Yes," briefly.

"You never took such a long journey before, did you?" asked Frances, with a kind of pert patronage.

"Yes, when we came to America, and I once went to Scotland with mamma."

Frances stared.

"I am going abroad in a year or so," she continued presently, with a toss of her golden head.

Cassy took off Dell's dress, bathed her face in some fragrant water, and brushed out her hair. Then Miss Sherburne came up—the trunk was unstrapped and several dresses taken out. Cassy selected a plainly made white one.

"You are very good, thank you," said Dell in a quivering voice, when she was through.

Frances giggled a little, and Dell flushed scarlet.

"I am very glad to be of service to you," returned Cassy, with a kind of rebuking dignity meant for Frances and lost upon her.

"Now you children may go down again," said Miss Sherburne.

"What a shocking figure!" cried Mrs. Beaumanoir.

"She looks as robust as a German field hand's offspring. If Edward's child only *had* been a boy!"

"She ought to be! And how is one ever to get her trained to any decent behavior? She has run wild with a parcel of street arabs. You never saw such actions! It was disgraceful!"

"Well, you can send her to school to tone her down. What is this beauty to be called?"

"I have been considering that. Her name is Honora Lyndell. I shouldn't want to use her mother's name, and Honora always does have an Irish sound to me. Lyndell is a queer name for a girl, and it is your mother's family name—" hesitatingly.

"It has a style, and she wants something to balance that ungainly figure. She is not as tall as Frances, and would make two of her in breadth. You will have to starve her for a while."

Cassy was busy about her mistress, but the ladies did not heed her presence while they fully discussed the unwelcome newcomer.

Frances Beaumanoir had led her cousin downstairs again, and out on the southern veranda, where Violet stood idly glancing over the lawn. Then she paused abruptly.

"We don't really know your name," she said.

Dell hesitated. "My whole name is Honora Lyndell. But I have always been called Dell."

"Why, that is short and pretty," said Violet turning.

"But it isn't a girl's name," protested Frances, rather captiously. "It was grandmamma's name. Millicent Lyndell—our Milly is named for her, and she has a friend called Honor. Are you really English? I thought English girls were slim. And oh, my, you are not——"

"Frances!" interposed Violet.

"I know I am not pretty." Dell was struggling with

tears and the flush of mortification that made her face redder than before. "But at Mamma Murray's no one cared."

"Did you have to call her mamma? She wasn't your mother. They just kept you."

"They kept me when mamma died. They loved me. I wish I could have stayed with them always!"

"But they were Irish!"

"I don't care if they were!" cried Dell passionately. "I wish I had been their very own child and I should not have had to come here. I hate the place! I always shall! I would not stay an hour if I could help it. And when I get to be a woman I shall go away—go back to them!"

Violet had been taking Dell's points in a rather supercilious manner. She was shocked at the outburst, and said: "That will do, Fanny. Don't tease."

"But you have a horrid temper, hasn't she, Vi? And the idea of wanting to live with Irish people when you could come to Sherburne House. Were they so very rich and elegant?"

"They were—better than any of you," cried Dell defiantly; her eyes in a blaze.

"Fanny, you must not quarrel. What will Aunt Sherburne say?"

Dell escaped suddenly from her tormentor, flying into the sitting-room.

"O Frances! how could you!"

"Must she really be our cousin, Vi? I think she is horrid! And her hair is red, redder, reddish, easily compared, and she hasn't a bit of a figure. Must she take Sherburne House away from dear Len? It's shameful!"

The supper bell rang. The ladies came downstairs. Dell suddenly brushed away her tears, but her eyes told tales.

"I wish you could leave off crying a little while," said Miss Sherburne complainingly. "You cannot afford to make yourself a fright. And it is so very disagreeable for those about you."

Frances looked eagerly at Dell, expecting some show of temper, but she simply stood silent, her face settling into rigid lines.

"She is extremely unpretty," the child thought. Then she studied Violet's clear skin, small, dainty mouth, graceful turn of the head, and she knew *she* was not deficient in personal charms. The Sherburnes had always been noted for pretty women, and Milly was a pronounced beauty. Frances had always heard about the Sherburne good looks.

She and Dell walked down one side of the table, Violet opposite, the ladies at the head and foot. Miss Sherburne asked a reverent blessing. She had taken the head of the family in all things, during her brother's illness.

Lyndell felt strange enough. The room was very large, wainscoted, and with painted walls and ceiling. At one side, opposite the windows, stood a massive antique sideboard in old mahogany, with no end of carving. At one end a very handsome pier table, and at the other a huge fireplace, ornamented over the mantel with branching antlers, and queer trophies. There was a row of quaint scriptural tiling set about the jambs. A pair of brass andirons crossed each other, and at either end a great jar with ferns and feathery asparagus.

At the south side were three deep windows with diamond-shaped panes of glass, and inviting recessed seats. A door, half sash, opened on the veranda. The fragrant air swept through, sweet with jasmin, and honeysuckle, and if Dell could have entered the room under any other circumstances she would have stood tranced in delight.

They all fell to talking, yet she realized with a keen

nervous sense, that is like a positive pain, the stress of these unfriendly eyes. Fortunately for her, Densie Murray had taught her children to behave properly at the table. She neither ate with her knife nor tumbled over her glass of milk nor dropped her biscuit, and she certainly was at home with a napkin. If Violet's large dark eyes had not so persistently studied her! The girl was strenuously objecting to a great disappointment. For it had been agreed—was indeed Mr. Sherburne's plan—that if Edward's child should die without inheriting, Sherburne House should go to Leonard Beaumanoir, he taking the family name, while the valuable coal and iron lands should be divided between Mrs. Lepage and Mrs. Stanwood. Violet had still another solution, a girl's romantic ending. If this unwelcome cousin should have to come and deprive Leonard of what was almost his birthright, might he not, in the course of time, marry her and thus win back his heritage? But this coarse, blowsy, sunburned girl, with hair of curiously faded streaks, no style, no figure, no charm of any kind, dull and ignorant—oh, why must she come to spoil everything! She felt that she should never be able to like her. And Aunt Sherburne was so fond of Leonard!

A young colored lad, Julius by name, waited upon the table. There was a little general talk about the journey and New York in the summer. When they all rose, Dell's impulse was to set back her chair, but the creak as it moved on the polished floor startled her, and she saw Frances walk away carelessly, so she followed.

"Frances," said Mrs. Beaumanoir, "you may take Lyndell down the path a short distance, and perhaps you will meet papa."

"Violet, you come with us."

Violet shook her head slowly. There were some questions she wanted to ask.

"What did you do when you were at the Murrays?" queried Frances.

"I went to school," briefly.

"Did you study French and music?"

"No—it was a public school."

"Why, it must have been like the schools for the children of the freedmen. Wasn't it dreadful—with everybody?" and the child made a gesture of disgust.

"A great many rich children went to our school," said Dell, rather pridefully.

"I shouldn't think they would. We have a governess. I suppose you will have one. You will have so many things to learn, you know,"—with an assumption of authority.

Dell was silent.

"What were the Murray children like?" continued Frances.

"Like other children," said Dell shortly. "Con was a big boy, and Tessy was ten months younger than I. Then they went on down to the baby."

"Con? What was his real name?"

"Constantine. And Tessy's was Teresa. Then there was Jamsie and Morna, and the others were boys."

"Were they very Irish?" asked Frances.

"I don't know what you mean?" Dell's temper was rising. "Mr. Murray came from Ireland—but I was born in England, and I am not English."

"Yes, you are. Mamma said that was the only redeeming feature."

"I am an American," Dell said decisively. "And so are they."

Then she glanced over the wide expanse, the clumps of trees, the thickets of flowers, the winding drive.

"You never saw anything like this?" commenced Frances, bent on extinguishing the interloper.

"Central Park is handsomer. We used to go down often, always on Saturday. We lived very near."

"Near Central Park! Why, I thought only rich people could live there," and Frances opened wide her blue-grey eyes. "Milly spent Easter with a friend she has there. And it was elegant, aristocratic."

"Who is Milly?"

"Why, my sister. She is a very handsome young lady and was introduced at Washington last winter. And she will make a splendid marriage. I wish I was old enough to be introduced."

Dell was not interested in such matters. She was thinking that she did not like Frances. Then carriage wheels crunched along the path.

"O, that's my papa!"

"Hillo!" cried a mellow voice, and a gentleman sprang out. "Has Aunt Sherburne come? And who is this?"

"This is—" Frances hesitated.

"I am Honora Lyndell Sherburne," the child said stiffly. Then with a swelling heart she added, "And oh, I wish I was Dell Murray again."

"And she would like to go back," declared Frances.

"That's a little bit of homesickness, you know. When you really get used to Sherburne you will begin to appreciate your good fortune. And you are really poor Ned's child! Well, since we have you here, we must do the best we can for you."

"O, I wish you did not need to do anything," cried Dell passionately. "I wish you could take it back, and I need not have to live here. But it will be eight years, papa Murray told me ——"

"Long before the eight years have come and gone we shall all be good friends. We were fond of your father. Where are the folks, Fan?"

"O, up at the house."

He put one arm over Dell's shoulder, but she ungraciously shook it off. If some one would give her a word of welcome!

They went up the wide steps of the veranda. Dell remained out of doors. She had a feeling that no one wanted her.

Presently Violet came out. She paused beside the hammock and stirred it idly.

"Did you ever swing in a hammock?" she asked.

"Yes." Dell stood up very straight. "You all seem to think I have just come out of the woods," she said angrily.

Violet turned away and left her alone.

Inside they were still at the interminable subject. Mr. Beaumanoir shook hands with and gently kissed Miss Sherburne.

"You must be tired to death," he said, "and the carriage is here to take all of us home. I saw our new relative. She seems stout and hearty, and I hope you will get on comfortably. Does she resemble her father?"

"She is an utter barbarian. I can't imagine a more disagreeable child!"

"With an abundance of temper," added Violet.

"We must make some allowance for the poor strange thing. But, Aunt Aurelia, it does seem hard that you should have to shoulder this burthen. What can we do to help? Has Whittingham any plans?"

"He will be here to supper to-morrow evening, and wishes to see you and settle the legal matters. You and he will be guardians. Of course, distasteful as it may be, I deem it my duty to undertake the regular care of the child. This is my home as well as hers. She has been exposed to all those mischievous radical beliefs that undermine one's respect for the sanctity of the home of

one's ancestors, and the truths that have been part of *our* lives, obedience, reverence, and regard for one's elders. It certainly will be a disheartening task. And to think of Sherburne House going into such hands ! "

" A good many things may come to pass in the space of eight years," said Mr. Beaumanoir in a consolatory tone. " Of course we are all disappointed at the turn of affairs, it would be useless to deny it ; but the child's rights are an established fact, and we all have enough reason and religion to make the best of it. And now, come, put on your wraps and let us return home. Aunt Sherburne needs a good night's rest as much as anything."

There was a little commotion of getting ready. They gave Dell a good-night as she stood quite by herself on the porch.

Then they drove away, and Miss Sherburne said in a rather rasped and fretful tone :

" Cassy, you may take Miss Lyndell upstairs to bed."

The room was pretty and sweet with dewy fragrances, but in all the wide world there was not a more miserable little girl than the heiress of Sherburne House !

CHAPTER VI.

NOT QUITE A BARBARIAN.

MISS SHERBURNE'S grievances grew larger with the brooding she gave them. She was physically tired, her nerves were strained to their utmost tension. The disappointment had not so utterly appalled her until she realized that her nephew's heir was really here, hedged about with the protection of the law on every hand, and she belonged to a law-abiding race. But it was bitter to see this utter stranger come in and carry off the old family honors, perhaps marry foolishly and dissipate the fine old estate that had descended in a straight line for nearly two centuries.

She arose in the morning unrefreshed. There were so many things awaiting her attention. Of course nothing could have gone on quite right without her at the head.

When Dell opened her eyes the sun was shining brightly, and oh, how the birds sang! Where was she? She glanced around the pretty room with its cool blue and white furnishing, and the shadowy grey-green light sifted in through the vines. It seemed a sort of fairy-land, and it was some minutes before she could remember the transformation.

Presently there was a light tap at the door, and Cassy entered.

"Am I very late?" the child asked.

"Oh, no;" and Cassy gave a reassuring if rather serious smile, as she began toilette preparations.

"I am used to dressing myself," she began.

"I always wait on the young ladies when they are here. Miss Sherburne prefers it."

Dell made no further demur. Cassy was so deft and gentle that it was a pleasure to have her ministrations. She selected one of the new gingham, and found a white apron. Just then there was a step in the adjoining room.

"I hope you will soon feel at home, Miss Dell," she said in a low tone, but the sympathy kindled a quick, grateful smile. And now Cassy remarked that Dell's eyes were lovely in the dewy freshness of restful slumber. The red and swollen appearance had gone out of her face and her skin was soft and fine. Neither was she rude nor awkward in her movements.

"Good-morning," Miss Sherburne said, "I shall expect you always to come and bid me good-morning."

"We always did at Mamma Murray's," Dell began to explain, when she was interrupted peremptorily.

"I do not wish you to use any such term. Mrs. Murray never was your mother in any sense. For the future speak of her by her proper name. It is my desire to have you trained in a mode of behavior suitable to your station, and to begin immediately."

Dell's face was one scarlet protest. "She was the dearest of mothers to me," she said with a swelling heart.

"I will have no impertinent rejoinders. And you may as well understand in the beginning, that you are to blot out the past four years, as if they had never been."

Dell was trembling with resentment and cast her eyes down on the floor.

"Can you not answer? I am not used to such boorishness."

"I—I—" and the child's eyes overflowed with tears.

"There, you have cried enough in the last few days to set any one wild. I have no patience with such tears. You ought to rejoice that God has been good

enough to rescue you from that poverty-stricken life and vulgar surroundings, and place you in your present position. I object to being treated to continual showers of tears."

Miss Sherburne walked down the wide stairs with a stately step, and Dell followed, crowding down her emotions, and setting her lips firmly. There was a brief prayer service in a small office room, and the house servants came in, casting curious glances at Dell. Afterward, as they were about to disperse, she announced stiffly :

"This is my grand niece, Miss Lyndell Sherburne."

Then they went out to breakfast, which was laid on a small round table between two of the windows. Julius waited upon them. Dell was really too frightened to eat, but fortunately committed no gaucheries.

Afterward Miss Sherburne stood debating in a most impatient manner. She was so accustomed to go about her own affairs without having any one to consider. There was the house to look over, accounts to make up, the servants to put back in their places. It was one of the articles of her belief that every person in an inferior position took advantage of the least relaxation of authority. But what was to be done with Dell? She could not turn her loose in the library ; she did not want her meddling or rambling about.

"You may go and sit on the veranda," she said. "I shall be busy awhile. In a day or two we will have some plans and studies. You know nothing of music, of course?"

"No," answered Dell quietly.

She went out on the porch, and presently settled herself in the hammock. Oh, what a riotous tangle of vines and flowers! Through one space she could see a tiny summerhouse covered with morning-glories of every tint. She had a wild impulse to run down there, then

she thought Miss Sherburne might be displeased. Over yonder was a thicket of roses. She drew long, throbbing breaths of pure delight. Was this really to be hers some day! Oh, if she might have Tessy and Con! She could imagine some of the little arms clinging around her neck.

The birds came and sung to her, peering through the vines with black beady eyes. A scarlet tanager made a swift dazzle in the sunshine. Squirrels ran up and down the great oak trees. Oh, how unutterably lovely everything was! A new passion stirred within Dell's soul with an intense pang that she was too young to translate, a vague, formless, clinging to the sense of beauty as if it were endowed with a human soul. The tears rushed to her eyes.

About an hour later Cassy came out with a sun hat, and said:

"Miss Dell, your aunt sends you permission to take a walk."

Dell glanced curiously at the beautiful chip hat with its wreath of flowers, finer than her Sunday hat at home. Ah, how the homelikeness and motherliness of the Murrys would always cling to her.

"I should like to go and see the morning-glories," she said, putting on the hat.

They walked about the lawn, that seemed enclosed in a park, and the park bounded by thickets of dense shrubbery like a wall.

"Where is the street?" she asked presently.

Cassy smiled. "We do not have streets here. We are at least half a mile from the road. And Beaumanoir is two miles distant."

"What is on that side?"

"The estate goes on a mile to a crossroad. It is a good deal wild land. Over beyond is a railroad station and a little settlement."

It seemed to Dell as if it might be the end of the world. She felt so away from everything.

"Isn't it very lonely?" she asked presently. "I like people."

"The children are over here nearly every day. And the Lepages and the Stanwoods come for long visits."

"I don't think they will like me," Dell said, after a meditative silence.

"Why?" asked Cassy curiously, though she knew of some forceful reasons.

"I cannot quite explain," and Dell's brow was knit in perplexity. "They do not want me here. Did you ever feel something all through you, like a hurt nerve, when some people come near you?"

"You will get over the strangeness. And they are all your cousins. Where did you live in New York?"

Dell told her, indeed grew quite descriptive of the home and school life.

"I was up one winter two years ago with Mrs. Lepage—she was not very well and wanted some treatment. We were at a hotel. I could have remained. A lady wanted me very much for her daughter's maid."

"Are you Miss Sherburne's maid?"

"Well—yes. I have been here ever since I was a little girl. It seems like home."

"I should have stayed," returned Dell decisively.

Cassy smiled softly, guessing the connection.

"Did you ever see my own papa?"

"Oh, yes. I was about nine when he went away. I used to play with and amuse the babies. Then Miss Julia took me and taught me a great many things. The major went to Alaska on some business for the government, and I came back. Miss Sherburne is particular, but she isn't a hard mistress."

"But—about my own papa—were they all very angry at his marriage?"

"I think we had better not discuss that, Miss Dell. They were all extravagantly fond of him. He had been like an own child to Miss Sherburne, his mother died when he was so young. He was handsome and charming, then he was the only son, and his grandfather had made him the heir of Sherburne House."

"I wish he had not. Then I need not have come here."

"But surely ——"

"I shall go away as soon as I am a woman. Eight years, papa Murray said. But it is a long while," and Dell sighed.

Cassy felt rather restricted in subjects of conversation. Miss Sherburne had said :

"Do not allow her to discuss the Murrays or her past life with you. I wish her to forget those Irish barbarians as soon as possible. And we know nothing praiseworthy about her mother."

Experience had taught her to be very careful before "little pitchers." Indeed it was her discretion that rendered her so valuable to Miss Sherburne, since there was always so much coming and going. And it must be admitted that she had imbibed the family feeling that this child was out of the pale of really legitimate family inheritance, even if the law gave it to her. Yet she began to almost pity Dell that she would be so far from rivalling her cousins in good looks.

For Cassy understood the value of beauty. Even she had much to be proud of. Tall, well-formed, supple, not so dark but that the pink glowed in her cheeks, glossy rippling black hair, straight, clearly cut features, she held herself royally above many of her fellows in the quarters. Then she was one of the few who had been born on the Sherburne estates. Old great-grandfather Sherburne had been wiser than many of his neighbors, and in the early days of the slavery agitation had sold most of his slaves to go further South, where they

were more secure ; hiring afterward large numbers, at their owner's risks.

Yet now that Cassy came to inspect Dell closely, in one of her natural moods, she seemed to give promise of amendment. Her eyes were fine, her lashes of glittering bronze that made a curious dazzle. Her mouth was not of the rosebud order, but the lips were finely formed, and of the magnificent red that betokens perfect health. When her complexion came to be cared for, her hands properly treated, her figure kept within bounds, she might not be so bad. And she certainly had a bright vein of humor ; she was far from being as ignorant as Miss Sherburne feared.

Miss Sherburne was not through with her multitudinous cares when they returned. She was a very thorough housekeeper and a most efficient manager, and would not have brought other than southern training into discredit. Then there was dinner, and the mistress felt the absolute need of a siesta to enable her to go through with the demands of the evening.

So Dell read and swung in the hammock until mid-afternoon. Then Cassy brushed her hair again and attired her in a delicate cambric. She took her seat on the veranda with Miss Sherburne.

"I have been too busy to attend to you to-day," the lady began, "and I have not considered any plans for your education. The free schools at the North are my utter abomination ; I suppose you know next to nothing."

Dell flushed and a fire lighted up the velvet eyes.

"I *do* know a good deal," she answered vehemently, "I would have been in the graduating class ——"

"I am not asking your opinion of your attainments," was the severe reply. "It might have answered for the position you were in, but your whole life has changed, and you must be fitted for it."

Miss Sherburne looked very stately and impressive in

her delicate black and white lawn, with fine thread lace at neck and wrist. She had settled herself with a tiny basket and took therefrom a strip of antique lace that was one of her diversions.

"You may read aloud to me," she said.

Dell had been esteemed an excellent reader at school and was frequently selected for declamation. She had a natural perception of emphasis, a clear voice, and fine enunciation.

"There, there," interrupted the lady; "not quite so theatrical if you please."

Dell stopped suddenly and flushed to the edges of her hair.

"That may do for the public school, but it sounds as if you were haranguing a mob. It is enough to set one wild! What studies did you pursue?"

Dell mentioned a goodly list. Miss Sherburne felt suddenly out of her depth, and she could not afford to blunder.

"You did not study languages or music?"

"We wrote music and sang by note. And we had industrial drawing ——"

"Well, you will not need *that*," impressively. "And you know nothing about the piano?"

"We did not have one at the Murrays ——" then Dell paused, startled at her forgetfulness.

"You have two bad habits, insolence and disobedience."

Dell drew her lips together with an angry emphasis. She could not forget her dearest friends, she would not if a hundred Miss Sherburnes commanded it.

Ah, how the birds sang! The bees droned, the soft wind rustled through the branches, the insects were chirping in their leafy coverts. Ah, if she could fly, or skim about in the sleepy sunshine, or hide herself in the grey-green nooks of fragrance.

"And you know nothing of needlework, I dare say?" in a dry tone. "When I was your age I could do anything with my needle."

"I can sew on the machine and crochet——"

Miss Sherburne sighed. Then the Beaumanoir carriage drove around with the three younger children and their mamma. They all came to kiss Aunt Sherburne. How could they! Dell felt like screaming at the very thought. They spoke to her with a certain hauteur, which was after all lost upon Dell.

"Cassy, you may take charge of the children," said Mrs. Beaumanoir.

"And we will play croquet," cried Frances—"but may be you do not know liow?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," answered Dell eagerly.

Cecil fell to Dell in the choice of partners: that is, Frances chose and Dell took what was left. Cecil was seven, quite tall and very fair, in a sailor suit, and had only recently discarded kilts and golden ringlets. A curly crop still covered his head and reminded her of Morna. Ned was rather consequential, in a most immaculate boyish toilette. He had dark eyes and quite dark brown hair and was a little past ten.

Cassy found the box of balls and mallets, and the ground was around at the southern end.

"How much do you know about croquet?" asked Ned rather insolently.

"All there is to know," retorted Dell.

"Well—look out for yourself, that's my warning."

But he soon found it was not needed. Her manner of handling the mallet and her strokes established her skill at once.

"Why, it will be no fun at all. You'll go straight through," he cried rather vexed.

"You don't play quite fair," declared Fanny, chagrined at such an able adversary.

"What have I done out of rule?" Dell asked, standing up defiantly.

"Well—you do not play quite as we do—" evasively.

"Then tell me just how."

Dell's last stroke took her out, and Cecil was quite a wise little player. The others dared her to a second game. Ned was very watchful and Frances did her best, but they were still on the losing side.

"Well, you are older, and you have played a good deal, you ought to beat. But you just wait until Vi plays you some day. You'll be beaten out of your boots."

Dell laughed rather joyously.

"Tell you what. I'll run you a race. Down there to the old sycamore."

"Done," said Dell.

Frances was the time-keeper. One, two, and off started Ned. Three! Dell closed her lips firmly. He ran swiftly, but she came in first.

"And you did not start honest," she said breathlessly.

He laughed unpleasantly. "My, but you're an awful tomboy!" he said.

"And you've made a guy of yourself! You are awfully red in the face," declared Frances with an air that suggested Miss Sherburne.

Dell fanned herself vigorously with the skirt of her dress. Ned sauntered around rather out of humor.

"Tell you what. I'll play you a game of checkers."

"I do not know how."

"Oh, stay and play croquet," pleaded Cecil.

"I will play with you," said Cassy. "And you know you won the game last time we played."

Cecil was delighted. The others marched off. Ned went in for the board, and Frances sauntered upstairs to find the elders.

Dell soon mastered the main idea of the game, for she was very quick. Then they began to play. Of course, Ned had every advantage and played up to it. He soon had her penned.

Dell bore the defeat pleasantly. The game interested her and she really desired to learn. But there was a sort of selfish triumph about Ned that stirred her to a kind of contempt. She was so generous herself. He did not mean his pupil to progress very rapidly, but she watched his moves closely.

Mr. Beaumanoir came up the path with his wide-brimmed panama in his hand. He had a very fair look at Dell, and there was something in her eagerness that interested him.

"Not a bad face after all," he said to himself. "I do wonder what her mother was like." Then as he neared them he surveyed the players.

"Edward, my son," he said gravely, "I do not think you are quite fair. Has your cousin played much?"

"I am just learning," explained Dell, glancing up, moved by the kindly tone. And she found a very friendly expression in the face.

"Cousin!" exclaimed Ned superciliously.

"Is she not your cousin, your uncle Edward's daughter? There, you have stopped her from playing; now let me take your place. My opinion is that you make a very poor teacher."

Edward relinquished his place unwillingly. Dell's heart beat with a sudden delight, and she glanced up smilingly. He could not forgive her all at once for standing in the place he coveted for his firstborn, but he returned her look with a certain kindliness.

"Did you give her the first game, Ned?"

"I showed her all the moves," rather ungraciously.

"That is not quite enough. Now," to Dell, "I will explain as we go along." And he did it very thor-

oughly; so well, indeed, that she went on triumphantly.

"Though I did not really win the game," admitted Dell honestly.

"Of course you didn't! It was a clear give away on papa's part. Well, I beat her seven times."

"That is not stating it correctly. You won seven games from an opponent who knew nothing about playing. Not a very gallant exploit, Master Ned."

Edward bit his lip.

"Now I am going to show you some of the holes the unwary fall into. Keep your eyes open."

He did this very amusingly. Then they played an earnest game. Dell was beaten, of course, but by a very little.

"And there was one time I thought you would surely pen me." He placed the men back on the board and explained it to her.

"Oh, and I never saw it. I am very much obliged to you for the instruction," she cried gratefully.

The ladies were coming out.

"Now a game with me," insisted Ned.

"I do not want to play any more, but just think it over," she answered.

"Well, you are very mean, after all the trouble papa took," the boy said crossly.

Lyndell rose and turned her glance haughtily upon him.

Mr. Whittingham came trotting up the avenue on his pretty chestnut mare. Dell caught his smile. Somehow she felt comparatively light-hearted, and here was the face of an old friend in these desert wastes. She ran down the steps and held out her hand as he dismounted.

"I am glad to see you so cheerful and so much at home," he said, with a grave, pleasant smile. "I hoped I should find you quite content."

Dell would not mar his pleasure. Perhaps it might be better than she had feared.

"Lyndell!" exclaimed Miss Sherburne, summoning her by a gesture as the two men were greeting each other. It would have been difficult to disentangle the mixed sensations that suddenly stirred in her soul, but she gave it the term of propriety.

"I am ashamed of such forwardness," she said with unnecessary sharpness. "You might have waited until Mr. Whittingham fairly touched the ground before you made such an indelicate rush at him."

Dell's face was scarlet. The glow of pleasure faded into lowering clouds. She hated them all in the next breath.

There was a pleasant confusion. Mrs. Beaumanoir was very elegant and gracious. She was extremely fine-looking, rather haughty. Mr. Beaumanoir was a large, portly man, with a rather humorous face, a flowing brown beard with silvery streaks, and a thin spot on the top of his curly head.

In the midst of the talk supper was announced. They all filed into the handsome old room, and Julius seated them and began the serving. No one seemed to notice Dell. The gentlemen were discussing some county matters, the ladies spoke of several of their distant neighbors, of some plans for summering. Mr. and Mrs. Lepage and their younger children were abroad; Major and Mrs. Stanwood in Canada. Ned and Frances squabbled a little until their mother had to speak to them.

Afterward the gentlemen retired to the sitting-room. Cecil begged Dell to swing him in the hammock.

"She is going to have a game of checkers with me," declared Ned.

Some spirit of malevolence stirred Frances. "I'll swing you," she said.

"I do not want to play," returned Dell.

"But you ought to give me one more chance. It is very mean of you."

"I cannot play any more to-night," Dell said impatiently.

"Can't she, Aunt Sherburne?" Ned appealed as that lady came to the window. "I've been showing her half the afternoon, and now she won't play even one game with me."

"If you must be disagreeable you can go up to your room," said Miss Sherburne, with quiet decision.

Perhaps she did not mean to be taken quite so literally. Dell rose, and with a quick sweep vanished in the hall. She was very angry. It seemed to her that Ned was unfair, ungenerous, mean, she should say if she was back with Con Murray. Con would thrash such a muff!

Then she bowed her head in her hands and cried bitterly. Oh, for some clasp of fond arms, some kisses from warm and loving lips.

When Miss Sherburne came up, after all matters were settled that could be decided upon at present, she found Dell soundly asleep. And she sighed as she thought of the future.

CHAPTER VII.

STANDING UP TO THE MARK.

MISS SHERBURNE was too much engrossed with business the next morning to feel like undertaking arguments of any kind with Dell. She did not even speak of the occurrence of the previous evening. She had promised to be early at Beaumanoir and was to accompany the two executors to the surrogate's office in the county town. So she merely placed Dell in Cassy's charge.

Dell's spirits rose as if a wintry cloud had been lifted from them. She swung in the hammock, she sat in the sunshine and read. Then she espied the interior of the office, the room where interviews with the work people and overseers were held, contracts drawn and signed, and business papers kept in the safe.

The table had some odds and ends of papers. There was also pen and ink. A sudden thought flashed in Dell's mind. It would be a good time to write her letter.

She went directly in and found some loose sheets of note paper and envelopes. She directed one to Miss Tessy Murray, and then began. Oh, how many things she had to say, some of them bitter enough, but the principal object of her wrath was Miss Sherburne. When she came to the love and longing for her old friends, her eyes filled with tears and she laid her head down on the table and cried. She was so wretched and lonely.

However, she presently recovered and finished the second sheet of paper, placed it in the envelope and

sealed it. Then she searched for a stamp, and found some in a box on the desk. Suddenly a thought that none of these articles were really hers, startled her.

"But I can pay her," she said triumphantly. "I will not take anything of hers without compensation."

She ran upstairs and hunted through her little hoard of money. Three cents for a stamp, two for paper and envelope. She went to the office and laid the five-cent piece in the box that held the stamps.

Just now a misgiving occurred to Dell. Would Miss Sherburne allow the letter to go without knowing its contents? And she could not, must not see them. That she would not be allowed to write at all did not at this juncture occur to Dell. How would she manage to send her letter? Was there any place nearer than Ardmore? Surely she could not walk there by herself. Well, she would watch and see who took the mail. How queer these great country places were! And oh, how lonesome one would get! It seemed to Dell at that moment as if she could fly to the ends of the world.

She went up to her own room again. What should she do with her letter? There was her bureau with all its drawers in nicest order. What pretty clothes they were; what fine handkerchiefs, what beautiful aprons, stockings, and here in a compartment ribbons for her hair. Her heart softened toward Miss Sherburne.

"But if I am going to be rich, of course the money is mine. She doesn't really *give* me these things."

At last she slipped the letter in the Bible that Mamma Murray had given her last Christmas, and suddenly pressed it to her lips in a burst of emotion.

Miss Sherburne did not reach home until nearly three. She had taken luncheon with the Beaumanoirs. Curiously enough she had dissented from the plan they all favored of sending Lyndell away to school. What her objections really were she could but lamely formulate.

The Sherburne girls had governesses and there was one at Beaumanoir, but Millicent had been away at school for two years, and Violet was to go in the autumn.

"It is my duty to know something about the child's principles and morals," she said decisively. "She has run wild long enough."

"But I thought a boarding school soon tamed down the most unruly. Then there are convents," suggested Mr. Beaumanoir.

"I am not anxious to make a Romanist of her. I dare say she had enough of that at the Murrays. I never inquired," and Miss Sherburne looked startled.

"Aunt Aurelia, I have an idea," and Mrs. Beaumanoir glanced at the sorely troubled face, that did appeal to her sympathy. "Let her be sent over here every morning. The children's lessons are from nine to twelve these warm days; Miss Burtis will be a good judge of her capabilities, and we can learn how amenable she is to rules and influences."

"Oh, how extremely generous of you, Laura, knowing utterly nothing about her!" and the tears rushed to Miss Sherburne's eyes.

"I will venture to predict that she will prove a quick scholar," said Mr. Beaumanoir.

"The children thought her hot-tempered ——"

"She is disrespectful, insolent, and she has no proper regard for her position. Her tastes seem low and vulgar. Of course one could hardly expect anything else;" and Miss Sherburne sighed. "But one might reasonably look for *some* evidence of good birth. She has it on one side, if she really be Edward's child."

"Mr. Whittingham thinks there can be *no* doubt. Of course, Aunt Aurelia, it *is* a bitter disappointment, but the child cannot help being in her present sphere, and we must not be unjust to her," said Mr. Beaumanoir.

Miss Sherburne came home quite relieved. She an-

nounced the arrangement to Dell, and the remainder of the afternoon was busy with accounts and letters.

Julius brought the light wagon around the next morning. Dell had been duly informed of the great favor, and given instructions as to her behavior. She had put her precious letter in her pocket, and when she saw Julius with the mail-bag in his hand, her heart gave a great bound. She could hardly wish Miss Sherburne good-morning with proper decorum.

"So you go to the post office?" she said, after they were seated. "Where is it?"

"At Ardmore, Missy. Allus go night and mornin', 'less Cato hab to drive."

"Then you may take my letter, too. I did not know—you will be very careful not to forget it?" and she glanced up anxiously.

"Yes, Missy. Won't forgit, no how. Missus bring a hornet's nest 'bout my ears if I dun go and forgit anything. Julius mighty kerful, I kin tell you," and he snapped his eyes humorously.

She dropped her precious missive into his outstretched palm with a sigh of relief.

"Hab to han' dat ar in sep'rate. Missy know next time. Missus allus lock de bag."

Dell nodded.

"How you like it here, Missy? We all tought Mas'r Leonard come to Sherbon' House. Ef you hadn't bin foun', or bin dead, he be de next mas'r shore 'nuff."

"I wish I had not been found," cried Dell sharply. "No one wanted me. And I was so happy and content. Everybody loved me."

Julius stared hard, and the whites of his eyes glistened like glass.

"Why, Missy!" in the sheerest surprise.

"I wish I could give it to him and go back to my own dear home."

"Mas'r Leonard he be mighty glad," and Julius chuckled.

If the heritage was really hers, why should they be so grudging! Not one word of real welcome had been given her. By sharp contrast, she remembered the Murrays' love and kindness. How generous for them to take in her sick mother, to give her shelter when she was no kin. She had never seen any selfishness or narrowness with them. Con had a large nature; Densie, a gentle one. They were always trying to make some one happy. In this atmosphere of loving, hearty interest, Dell's soul had grown large and true, and reasoned with a simple directness.

Julius handed her out with great politeness. At a first glance Beaumanoir looked much like Sherburne House, except that it was not so imposing, and the lawn displayed a greater diversity of bloom. Violet stood on the wide veranda.

"Oh, good-morning," she said, in a soft, lady-like voice. "Let me take you to mamma."

Dell followed. The house had a more modern aspect, but it was chiefly in the furnishing. Mrs. Beaumanoir greeted Dell with careless courtesy.

"Aunt Sherburne explained to you, I suppose, that you were to take lessons with the children until some permanent arrangements could be made. Lay aside your hat. I hope you will get on well together."

She rose and led her through a long hall to the school-room, where sat the three younger children. Cecil was printing letters on a slate.

"This is the child we were talking of, Miss Burtis, Miss Lyndell Sherburne, my dear, dead brother's daughter. You will see what she is capable of in a little examination, though, I dare say, she is not up to the average. But it will be such a relief to Aunt Sherburne to have her where she will get a little civilized."

Dell flushed scarlet. Why did they all think her such a barbarian?

Miss Burtis was not young and had a rather thin, austere face, but the tones of her voice were kindly. "We must see what you can do," she began. "We Southerners have not a very high opinion of public schools. It is impossible to train so many children together and give them anything beyond the merest superficial smattering. The bright children show for the whole class, and the slow ones make small progress."

There was a sense of unfairness in setting her down as dull, when they knew nothing about her. Dell's pulses throbbed resentfully.

Miss Burtis began to question her at the very bottom of the ladder. Ned was listening with a sort of half-malicious smile. The injudicious talk about Dell had warped and colored the children's opinions.

"I have gone far beyond that, Miss Burtis," Dell explained with a pardonable triumph in her tone. "I was passing my examinations for the graduating class."

The governess had fancied the child extremely ignorant and backward. But she found that in ordinary English branches she was farther advanced than Miss Fanny; Latin, French, and music were unexplored regions to her.

"We had better begin with Latin at once," and she found her a book, making a few explanations about accents and the division of syllables. Dell thought it extremely ridiculous, and could not help going over in her mind the queer "hog latin," the boys in Murray's Row used when talking their secrets.

She possessed a quick and retentive memory, and though her new friends might abhor public schools, they had given Dell an excellent training. So it was not long before she glanced up with a half smile of assenting satisfaction.

"You surely cannot have learned it?" Miss Burtis asked in vague surprise.

"Yes. It is not a very long lesson;" cheerfully.

She repeated it with the utmost exactness. Frances and Ned stared. Neither were particularly bright scholars; though Frances was fond of the lighter accomplishments.

Just then Violet entered. She was not confined to the schoolroom for the restlessness of the younger children annoyed her.

Miss Burtis felt that her new scholar had really fine abilities, and was much farther along in the paths of knowledge than her relatives imagined. She examined her in one or two studies in which she was equal to Violet, although she did not think it wisdom to propose their reciting together just yet.

Cassy drove over for her in the phaeton. She was to take home her Latin book, and one in philosophy, and to ask Miss Sherburne about music lessons.

After dinner she went at her task, taking a corner of the veranda. Miss Sherburne was upstairs. She was tired of keeping so still and began a little ramble down the northern end of the house. Another part seemed joined to it, then a large kitchen, the passageway being a vine-covered trellis. Then a wide, luxuriant garden stretching out, meeting a vineyard and an orchard. As she strayed around quite a distance to the south, she saw what looked like a little hamlet.

Some sounds caught her ear. Making another turn she came across a rather curious enclosure, shut off from the house by a thicket of spruce and pine. The grass was worn off in patches. There were some benches of the rudest sort standing around; a host of little darkies tumbling about, wrestling, standing on their heads, and a group dancing to the music of a jew's-harp, with an accompaniment of bones. Some women in gay

turbans were sitting around sewing, or nursing babies. Dell recalled a gaudily-colored chromo wonderfully like this, only there was no old fiddler here.

She looked on with curious delight, a child's eager interest in humanity.

Two little darkies came rolling to her very feet. "Hi!" cried one, showing his teeth from ear to ear. "Who am dat? Mammy, jes' come here!"

All eyes were turned to Lyndell. She colored and was fain to retreat.

"It's young Missy, isn't it?" asked a pleasant faced woman with her sewing, a child's dress, in her hand. "We's bin waiting to have a look at you, honey, don' go 'way. Here's a cheer."

"I was taking a walk—I ——"

"You Andrew Johnson! you jus' done clar out, starin' at Missy!" as the children began to crowd up around her. "Here you James Henry!" and the woman dealt some blows right and left that sent the youngsters sprawling on the ground.

"Oh don't!" pleaded Dell as they set up a terrific howl, but the next instant they went chasing each other over the wide space.

A tall, bent old woman came pressing through the throng.

"It's Missy shore 'nuff. Mar's Edward's little gal who oughter been borned here, 'stead o' way off in furrin parts. We never knowed for sartin honey whether you's dead or libe, or comin' here or not. Eberybody 'spected Mas'r Leonard be next on de carpet, anyhow arter old Miss done gone. But it's all right I 'spect. We don' know much 'bout law 'n all dat. An' den we hear Mar's Edward's little gal got to cum an' no one kin put her out. An' my darter Zilla she were his mammy, and she lubbed him jes' like her own babies. 'Twas way back in times you don' know nuffin

'bout. An' I was libbin in de great house yere, cookin' and bakin'. Sich times nebber come back no mo': and Mas'r Edward he jes' grow right up, straight an' tall an' handsome, an' he granpa believe the berry sun rise in dat ar boy. An' all de ladies gittin' marr'd an' comin' home wid der chillen an' sech times! An' Mar's Edward he go off to collegé an' come home harnsomer'n ebber, an' den dat furrin women done stole him 'way an' he die an' eberybody go mos' crazy."

The old woman paused to draw her breath.

"That was my own mamma," cried Dell indignantly. "And she did not steal him away."

"Oh, yes, honey." The old woman nodded her head with a weird sort of emphasis. "She done stole him 'way clar across de big sea. An' he git clar bewitched. No one eber see him again until he dead, an' den she can't keep him no mo', fer de spell of de bewitchment is jes' bruk. How you git across de big sea?"

"I came with my mamma. And she loved my papa dearly. She was always crying for him. And when she died"—Dell's lip quivered and her voice broke.

"Oh, honey dear, don't cry," pleaded the old woman rocking herself to and fro. "De big law men gib it to you, an' you ain't to blame——"

"Maum Leah," spoke up a comely youngish woman whose soft voice attracted Dell instantly, and who smiled over the baby she held in her arms as her expressive eyes caught those of the child. "Maum Leah, she goin' to be our young Missis and we are all ready to love her. Little Missy is all right for her grandfather settled it, and it never could be Mar's Leonard's while she's alive."

"I wish it was his," cried Dell passionately. "I would a thousand times rather go back to the dear friends who loved me, and who cared for my own mamma."

"Missy," said the woman with a caressing sound in her voice, "Missy you wait a little wile. Yous'e home-sick an' strange now. But yous'e goin' to grow up here a nice young lady, and when you get trained and learned you'll be able to do ever so much, An' then you'll be glad of this gran' old home, an' you'll be happy as the day is long. An' you mustn't mind what anybody say. Mammy is always mammy to chilleens, no matter what they be to other folks. An' all the bewitchment is just love an' nothing else, and Mar's Edward just go after the girl he love because he want her."

"Shore Missy I ain't gon ter gredge yo good luck," began Maum Leah again. "Some folks dough mity dis'pinted. An' you come 'cross de big sea — miracle you wasn't drowned. De Lawd he tuk care ob you. An' if he done tuk care ob you, you mus' be some ob his sheep. An' if he watch ober you an' bring you here, mus' be right somehow." The old woman stopped with a curiously perplexed expression.

"Of course it's right, Maum Leah," said Lizzy, "and we're all going to make her feel welcome. And some day she'll be glad she came, and she'll love the old place ——"

"I never *can* love it," declared Dell vehemently.

"O yes, Missy. I was born an' raised over yonder, an' sold South before de war. An' I know 'bout de ache and de homesickness, an' de longin' when your heart seem to come out'n your body. An' when we was all free I come right along back, an' Sherbon' House de best place I ebber see yet. An' Missy 'll think so one of dese days."

The baby had been laughing to Dell and now she smiled back, holding up her finger for him to grasp at. Some of the little darkies stole up shyly again. One brought her a handful of flowers; another offered her a luscious pear. Their amusing idioms, their quaint sharp

comments to each other, the way they rolled up the whites of their eyes and showed their glistening white teeth, made her smile. Lizzie mounted guard that they should not prove obtrusive.

"You like chillen?" she said.

"O, I have been with them so much since I came to America. And where I lived they always had a baby."

"Honey, you was only a little chick when yer pa died," put in Maum Leah. "An' you can't 'member 'bout him. He was han'some honey, han'some! An' you don' look like him," shaking her head sadly.

Dell flushed, partly with anger, partly with a desperate sense that all Sherburne House to the very servants were minded to feel aggrieved by her coming. It was very hard.

Then her glance was caught by two little darkies turning summersaults. They looked so funny as their woolly heads followed their bare feet with only a very small space between.

"Shall we run a race, Missy?" asked one. "I kin beat Hec all to rags!"

"No you can't nuther!" cried Hec indignantly, hitching up his trousers by one suspender.

"Chillen, chillen," said Lizzy in her soft protesting voice.

"O yes," said Dell. "Run a race. I'd like to myself."

They stood on a line and swung their hands. At a word from Dell they went skimming over the ground, trodden hard and even as a floor. At first Pete seemed to keep the advantage, but suddenly Hector flew along and reached the goal.

"That wasn't fair!" shouted Pete, and seizing his opponent began to pummel him. They rolled over and over in the sparse grass.

"They'se always picking at each other," said Lizzy, who did not seem to take the scrimmage amiss. "Hecky's my boy."

"It was you, Pete, who were unfair," said Dell as they righted themselves and glanced back rather sheepishly. "When you lose a race fairly you ought to be honorable."

"But I kin beat him nex' time," confidently.

"H'yar you Pete!" exclaimed his mother, catching him up and cuffing him vigorously. "I'se 'shamed of you, before de young Missis. Now you jest toe de mark or it'll be wus for you."

But Pete did not seem afraid of imaginary marks or the cuffing. The next instant he was off skylarking.

"Do you all live here?" inquired Dell. "Of course I know you are not slaves."

"A good many of us live roun' here," in her soft flowing tones that sounded to Dell like the purling of a stream. "Maum Leah and all the house slaves were freed, but they didn't want to look out no new home. We had a good master and missis."

"And you like Miss Sherburne?" Dell said it involuntarily, and with extreme astonishment.

"Old Miss mighty straight, but she never say one thing an' do 'nother. She don' starve no one, an' she give fair wages. An' when she's served well she know it. If she ain't all honey to start, you don' get more an' more bitter as you go on. Yes, she's a good Missis. An' it'll all come right with you bimeby. The Lord, he don' give all the grace an' good things right off. You wait an' wait, an' leary patience."

"Is that the quarters?" asked Dell, glancing at the cluster of whitewashed cottages.

"Yes. Then over yender is the 'bacca plantation. We don't raise much cotton now. And a sight of truck gardenin'. We gets things off early in the season. Then

the can factories takes heaps of things. Mis' Sherbon', she long-headed. She don' set down an' cry when de war break up everything, but just go on."

"Couldn't I go over the quarters?" and Dell started eagerly. Somehow she could not consistently listen to Miss Sherburne's praises.

"If Missis is willin'," said Lizzy, glancing at her questioningly. "We all like to know young Missy an' make her welcome everywhere."

Dell colored with a sudden consciousness. There was a great confusion as yet on the subject of her own rights. Then she said resentfully, "But if Sherburne House is mine——"

"Yes Missy. But ole Missis some kind of thing to you—I can't 'member just now, only she oversee you. And ole Missis can't bear to have nobody take the rule out'n her hands. I can't make it all straight to you Missy, only maybe she want to bring you some day an' tell us about our new little Missy——"

"Yes," she answered, to this simple indirect appeal to her honor. "I was only rambling round the house. What a great place it is! And I must go back," she added, reluctantly.

Maum Leah and two or three other women were in an eager discussion about Lyndell's mother. Lizzy did not consider it wise to have the child overhear it. For opinion had run very high in bygone years to the detriment of Mrs. Edward Sherburne, and recent events had revived the old traditions. Miss Sherburne's disappointment was well known.

Lizzy turned and walked with her.

"Missy, we all hope you'll be happy," she said with a sweet gravity that touched Dell. "Some of us wait a long wile for things to come round, but the good Lord he don' never quite forget. It's such a big world, Missy, and everybody can't come to the first table an'

get served right away. 'So we try to wait patient 'til our turn.'

"Oh, I like you!" Dell cried suddenly, catching Lizzy's hand. "I wish ——"

"Missy must pray for the things she want."

They stood at the intervening spruces. The servants were not allowed beyond except on special business. So they said good-bye.

Cassy was sitting on the side porch, sewing.

"Oh," she exclaimed, relieved. "I was thinking I must start and hunt you up."

"I have been walking around the house. What a great place it is! And there was a man once, Cassy, who wrote a book from just walking around his room. Our teacher told us."

Some guests were driving away. Miss Sherburne came out to them.

"Oh, here you are with Cassy," she exclaimed in a relieved tone. "Have you studied your lessons?"

"I had only the Latin. Yes, I know it." Then she colored. She would have announced so frankly to Mamma Murray where she had been, but something seemed to hold her back. And now she knew by a sudden intuition that Miss Sherburne would sharply disapprove of it. But she had not forbidden her, and what was the great wrong in it?

"Come and repeat your lesson to me," said the lady.

Dell followed.

There was no word of praise. "You must begin French at once," she announced, peremptorily. "And music. Though I doubt if you will make much of a player," and she looked at the sun-browned hands. They were not small, certainly, rather fat, and the nails had not been nicely kept.

"What ungraceful hands, and stubby fingers!" she

cried in disgust. "I can't see a bit of Sherburne about you. You must be altogether like your mother."

"But my own mamma had long, slim, white hands," said Dell with tears in her eyes, surveying the dimpled knuckles and joints. "And she was tall and very fair."

"Well, you will never be tall. One can tell that from your style. You will be short and stout, unless you are dieted and trained, and it seems a hopeless undertaking anyhow."

Miss Sherburne sighed.

CHAPTER VIII.

GILDED PRISON BARS.

THE Beaumanoir carriage came round the drive. To-day it was Violet and Cecil with their mother. Cecil pleaded for croquet, and Dell was glad to go with him to escape the sharp glances that seemed so unfriendly. She could amuse children delightfully, and Cecil was taken captive with her merry ways, her good-humored readiness.

Miss Burtis' verdict had been much more favorable than any one expected. Mrs. Beaumanoir was quite disposed to look at some of the possibilities, and accept philosophically what must be endured.

"Since we cannot make her pretty and stylish, I am thankful she has the capability of receiving a good education. Of course we cannot *quite* tell. They cram children dreadfully in the northern public schools, and train them so by rote. Miss Burtis is willing to give her music lessons, but I was thinking, aunt, that it would be better to begin with Mr. Sterret, as Miss Burtis will go away presently."

"And that must be arranged for," cried the poor lady. "I can't have her running wild all summer."

"You had better decide in favor of a school, I think."

"That could not provide for her until autumn. And it would take her interest entirely away. I want her to learn to care for her home, to respect it, to have some veneration for it. It is *not* like any ordinary home. I do not believe she ever can be made to ap-

preciate her father's family or her good birth on the one side, but it seems *my* duty to try and instill this into her."

"Unless you find her utterly unmanageable. There is a sort of obstinacy in her face that I fear. Still we may find some one to take charge of her in vacation. I will ask Miss Burtis. She had friends in several northern cities."

While the ladies planned and bewailed, Dell quite won Cecil's heart. Of course Cassy played duenna. The strange relative was too little known to be trusted with any young member of the family. When they were tired they came and sat on the steps of the veranda. Violet had opened the parlor windows, and was playing on the piano. She had an exquisite touch and music was a passion with her.

Dell listened carelessly at first, but now and then a strain like one of Mamma Murray's songs roused her. It was indeed part of an opera with a song that had been a great favorite twenty years before. Dell's heart began to beat tumultuously. A passionate longing rose in her soul to be folded again in the dear arms. She hardly remembered the last quivering notes of the melody, or realized that it had ceased.

Violet came to the window, stepped out, but Dell did not stir. She leaned slightly against the column with a kind of relaxed softness in her shoulders and the curve of her neck. The wind had blown the short ends of her hair about her forehead, giving it a misty look, her mouth had an unknown sweetness, and her eyes, fixed on some far object, yet not seeing it, were filmed over with tears that quivered but did not fall.

"She is not so very plain," Violet thought. Then with an effort she steeled her heart against her. She had spoiled all Leonard's future. Sherburne House could never be the lovely old home they had always

counted on, with this strange girl growing up in it. And surely she could not have the affection, the interest, the pride of family that had been borne and bred in them until it had become a second nature. A girl who would be just as happy in returning to a hovel! for Violet somehow entertained the idea that emigrants must perforce keep to their own station in life when they came to America. She had listened to the description of the crowd in the Murrays' yard and Dell dancing before them, and it woke a feeling of disgust.

The Beaumanoirs did not remain to supper. Dell thought the evening dreadfully long. She sat on the steps in the soft light and lived over again the most delightful of the olden hours. She came out of her reverie the instant she glanced up and caught Miss Sherburne's cold, disapproving eyes, that had changed all of life for her.

If Miss Sherburne could have brought herself to a familiar conference with her new charge and explained her own wishes in the matter, appealing kindly to Dell to help her carry them out, the child would have taken her true place at once. As it was, she felt like a bird suddenly caught and caged, taken to an unknown sphere. No one had even properly introduced her to it. Mr. Murray had made the only explanation, and she puzzled her brain wondering how all this large estate could be hers and yet she have no real right to anything.

Julius took her to school the next morning. Her Latin was a success. Then Miss Burtis started her at French. Alas, poor Dell! Something was the matter with her tongue. Ned tittered a little and Frances glanced at her with a sort of insolent pity. Dell colored, became confused, and not another word would she utter.

"Well," said Miss Burtis kindly, "you may wait a while. The pronunciation *is* difficult at first and the accent very trying to a new beginner."

Frances rattled off hers in triumph. When they had all been dismissed, Miss Burtis took Dell kindly in hand and made some simple explanations.

"I shall never learn it," said Dell decisively. "I hate the sound of it. And I simply *can't*. What is the use. I shall never go to France."

"My dear child, you are almost sure to go to Paris some time in your life. Then it is a really elegant accomplishment. There is a great deal in French literature that may be studied to an advantage. But hereafter we will have it by ourselves. You do so well in Latin that I am quite sure the other will come easily by and by."

Dell sighed in doleful indifference.

As she was driving home with Cassy, she said suddenly :

"Will you not let me get out and walk? I am so tired of sitting. I want to run and jump. I will promise to keep up with you."

"Miss Dell!" Cassy looked horrified. It had been very distinctly impressed upon Cassy's mind that she must do something toward training this young savage; that all wildness must be repressed.

"Well—why not? Haven't I any rights because I have been brought here against my will? Can't I stir a step, or take a walk, or do anything as I like?"

"You are to obey Miss Sherburne. And Miss Dell, you were around to the quarters yesterday, alone. I am quite sure she will be vexed when she hears it."

"If Sherburne House is *mine*, I have a right to go about it," returned Dell with sharp independence.

"But it is not yours yet. You must wait until you are of age. And you must do as your guardians wish."

"My guardians?"

"Yes, and Miss Sherburne is one of them. Mr. Whittingham and Mr. Beaumanoir take care of the money and do the business, and Miss Sherburne will look after your education. And she wants you to be a lady."

Dell's breath came hard and her face flushed.

"Well," she said passionately, "I hope I shall never be such a lady! I wouldn't be like her for all the world! I would a hundred times rather be like Mamma Murray. And if I am to have nothing at all, and no liberty, why, then, I am a prisoner!"

Cassy made no reply. Dell winked hard to keep the tears out of her eyes. To Cassy there was a settled and unalterable manner of being a lady. The Beaumanoir children might do selfish and disagreeable things, but they were graceful, well-mannered, trained in certain society ways, and these were right. Cassy had great respect for good birth, and Dell's low proclivities had been so largely and freely discussed, that she looked upon them with dismay, although she felt a curious pity for the child.

What a horrid afternoon it was! Dell was unfortunate at the table. She dropped her fork and dodged quickly to pick it up, coming in view with a flushed face. This was pointed out as a blunder. She was confused, and presently tipped over her glass of water.

"How clumsy you are!" exclaimed Miss Sherburne sadly annoyed. "You will leave the table."

Dell flounced out of the room. She was still hungry and that made her cross.

After the Latin, Miss Sherburne bade her come out on the veranda.

"Do you know how to sew?" she inquired.

"I can run the machine," answered Dell quickly.

"What a vulgar manner of announcing it—as if you

had been brought up a common seamstress ! And hand-sewing looks so much more refined. Of course, you know nothing about embroidering, or lace-work, and I did yards of it before I was as old as you. Here is some ruffling you may hem."

Poor Dell. She pricked her finger, the thread knotted, her hands perspired, the needle creaked and then broke. The sewing was soiled and she was sent to wash her hands. The offensive work was cut off and she was started again. All the long warm afternoon she toiled over the wretched sewing, only to emulate Penelope's web in the end.

"You will have to sew every afternoon until you can do it neatly," was the sharp comment.

Dell had a wild impulse to spring up and defy her. The birds were flitting from tree to tree, or making a swift dart across the sky. Oh, if she had been a bird !

A carriage drove up and two ladies with a fine-looking elderly gentleman alighted.

"You may take your sewing and go around on the side veranda," said Miss Sherburne.

Dell flitted through the hall. She had no curiosity concerning the guests. But she sat on the step, idly, for many minutes. A squirrel ran across the walk and seemed to wink at her out of his bright eyes. Then the ungovernable desire overcame her. She ran down the path. Ah, how delightful it was in the sweet, inspiring air ! How good to feel one's pulses stir and thrill. On she went like a deer, over the short grass, the paths, anywhere. She was free for a moment. If she had come back all would have been well. But she threw herself on the grass under a tree and listened to the drowsy music of the summer day. She was almost asleep when a voice roused her.

"Lyndell ! Lyndell Sherburne, get up this moment. You rude, ill-behaved girl ! Had you no better sense

than to go racing around like a mad creature? One would surely think you had never been in civilized life, never seen any decent people. Go back to the house and up to your room at once. I am ashamed of you."

Dell walked stiffly. "She can't take my splendid run away from me," the child thought exultantly. She went to her room and took up the hateful sewing, feeling that she could tear it to bits. And there she remained. Her supper was brought up by Cassy. Before she went to bed she had to listen to a lecture on her rude and uncouth behavior. And though she looked sullen and indifferent while she was listening, she cried herself to sleep afterward.

On Saturday Miss Burtis came over with the children. Miss Sherburne listened with most contradictory emotions to the account the governess gave of her new pupil. She would not have wished her dull and ignorant, and yet she hated to think she had made progress under any auspices save those of Sherburne House.

The natural instinct of the children for fun overcame the secret antagonism between them. They ran some races, then Ned dared Lyndell to climb a tree, which she did without hesitation.

"O, we must go down and see Aunt Chloe," he cried presently. "Come on. The little pickaninnies are so funny. And Aunt Chloe always has something good to eat."

Lyndell followed. If they could go to the quarters why not she? Through the pine plantation they dashed, coming out in the midst of the cottages. There was a shout of welcome as the little darkies espied Massa Ned.

Massa Ned put them through sundry evolutions, whistled that they might dance a breakdown. Dell noticed a fat woman in a blue petticoat and faded short gown standing in a doorway which she filled, her hands

on her hips and laughing until she shook. It was such an odd place—a one-story cabin with a peaked roof. At either end stood a hogshead to catch the rain drips. The door was in the middle with a window on each side.

"There's Aunt Chloe." Ned ran over.

"Bres' de Lawd if yer ain't Mass' Ned an' Missy. Come in chillen. Aun' Chloe baked a nice cake an' no' you's must hab a chunk. An' dat ar gal—she de one dat cum frum dat wicked city wat de passon sed was like Sodom 'n Gomorrer. Gib tanks chile dat you 'scaped alibe. An' you don' look no more like Missy dere 'n a posy like a blackberry vine. No one 'd b'lebe you 'n Missy cousins."

"Cousins!" ejaculated Ned indignantly. For though there had been much talk of Uncle Edward they had never given the child a virtual relationship. "Cousins!" as if the idea was distasteful.

Aunt Chloe's fat sides shook, as she gave a loud guffaw. "Wher' yer reck'nin' Massa Ned? Ain't no cousins an' yer mudder 'n her fadder own brudder 'n sister. Sho now! An' if she hadn't been, who'd done gone scourin' de kentry roun' jes' as dey used wen slaves run away to fin' her! 'Twould a made a mity sight ob dif'runce to some of you uns. But good lan'! Yer don' favor de Sherbons any more'n if yer didn't b'long to 'em."

Dell flushed resentfully; Edward's look had stung her. But surely she did not want them for cousins any more than they wanted her.

"Now you jes' cum in an' hev yer cookies. Dey got sugar on de top an' nutmeg. I knows whose got a sweet toof. An' sum fer new Missy?" glancing at Dell. "You like cookies?"

"I don't want any." Dell turned away and at that moment spied Lizzy, hastening at once to her.

"O, Miss Lyndell! I saw you here with your cousins.

Maum Chloe always gives them some sweets. Don' you ——"

She made a rush at Lizzy and began to sob vehemently.

"There, there, honey, don' cry so. Was any one cross to you? Pore lamb!"

"They don't want me here! None of them do! And I'm so lonesome and wretched with no one to love me ever such a little bit."

Lizzy's clasp tightened.

"If I had wanted to come to Sherburne House," sobbed Dell, "it would have been different. And oh, why can't I go back?"

"O Missy dear, don' cry so. You see no one can help ner hinder. The good Lord he jes' let it happen this way, and maybe the reason all come round clear some day. 'Tain't daylight all to once Missy. An' it's darkest jes' 'fore dawn, but the day always comes. And you must jes' trus' the Lord."

"How can I?" cried Dell despairingly. "And you see there is nothing about me that fits Sherburne House, while at home with Mamma Murray everything was smooth and delightful. I did not *try* to be good—it came easy."

"You had anoder mammy?" queried Lizzy. At the quarters they had an idea that the child had been rescued from some terrible kind of life.

"Oh let me tell you." They walked on to Lizzy's cabin. There was a neat living room where the floor was scrubbed clean as a pin. The adjoining apartment was a sort of parlor, with a square of carpet in the centre made of odds and ends so tastefully arranged it looked almost like an oriental rug, but Lizzy knew nothing about the Orient and its manufactures. A bed stood in one corner, piled up high and white as a snowdrift. At a window sat a young girl sewing on a machine.

It seemed so good to Dell to tell her story even to a colored woman who had no place in the great house. In the dreary loneliness Dell realized that she had found a true friend. She could feel it in the gentle clasp, in the soft, sympathetic eyes. And surely the Murrays' friendly deed lost nothing at her hands. It seemed as if she had never understood the full purport and generosity of it until now. Her soul awoke to the true measure.

Lizzy wiped her eyes. "They were the Lord's own people," she said. "And you see, honey, how he raised up friends fer you and your poor sick mother. He's watchin' you now. His ways is mysteries," and Lizzy's voice dropped to a reverential sound.

"But you see, I ought not forget them."

"Fergit them, Miss Lyndell! Why, honey, that would be the mos' unthankfulest thing of all. No you mustn't fergit them. And the Lord 'll bring them to you somehow. We can't see. But it'll all come right for them that trust the Lord."

Dell did not understand the reasoning, but the soft flowing voice comforted her and she dried her eyes.

"You kin eat a saucer of berries, I know," and Lizzy smiled. "An' a chunk o' cake."

"You are so kind. And if you'll let me come often——"

Lizzy shook her head slowly, regretfully.

"That mus' be as ole Missis says. She rule eberybody. But you're always welcome. I'm glad there was somethin' to make you happy up norf," and she indicated the far-off city with her head. "I hope you'll git over bein' homesick. Some nice people over yender brought me up, 'n when they died 'n I was sold Souf, my heart break, fer shua! I wanted to run away 'n come back. I cry to the Lord powerful, honey, an' he send his angel 'cordin' to promis'. Homer, that's my man, come to

comfort me. An' de good Lord give me a baby, an' dat gloris freedom we all prayin' fer, an' led us back tru de wilderness. De Lord bring it all right, honey."

Dell finished her berries and glanced over the rows of vegetables, the waving corn, the poles of beans in white and scarlet array. About the door hung great sprays of honeysuckle and a pyramid of hollyhocks. Out beyond was a gorgeous poppy bed, and roses everywhere. Some of the cabins seemed set in the desert by mere contrast, and more than one garden patch was full of weeds.

Just then a tall, thin mulatto man came up the walk. He stooped a little in the shoulders, and his gait was rather shambling, but he had a good face, full of that honest, pathetic, wordless asking that you sometimes find in faces that have puzzled over the mysteries of life. There had been many for Homer Jackson, but he was very comfortable now, happy in the love of wife and children, and sufficiently penetrated with the ambitions of the new order of things to desire advancement for his children if he could not have much for himself.

"This is young Missy, Homer," said his wife. "Miss Lyndell, who will one day be missis to us all," and she smiled.

He had a bundle of blocks and pieces of board under one arm, but with the other he touched his old straw hat.

"Welcome, Missy," he said. "I knowed yer pa when he was a han'some young man. An' I hope everybody's made you welcome. 'Pears right fer Mar's Edward's chile to come back 'nong us, but there's been a many changes. 'Pears hard he couldn't a lived to come hisself."

Dell's eyes filled with tears. The regret seemed so kindly, so sincere.

"But we'll do all we kin in duty to you, Missy," and he touched his hat again. "'Twon't be long 'fore you're a young lady growed up."

Dell suddenly realized that it must be late, and wondered what had become of Ned and Frances.

"You jes' run over to Chloe's," said Lizzy to Homer junior.

The children had gone long ago. Dell flushed with an unwonted heart tremble. Then she seized Lizzy's hand and pressed it to her cheek. It was soft and shapely. Toil had not left unsightly impresses on it.

"Good-bye," she cried, and ran down the sort of lane-like street.

As she threaded her way through the shady pines, the dry needles yielding like cushions under her feet, her whole being was mysteriously stirred. Here her father had played about as a little boy. Everybody seemed to remember his bright winsomeness. Everybody had loved him! It appeared an incomprehensible mystery that he should have gone away—even with her mother. Of the greater love and the enthusiastic faith of manhood and womanhood Dell could know nothing as yet. But for a moment she felt tempted to blame her mother.

Just as she emerged from the pines she caught sight of Cassy coming swiftly toward her.

"O Miss Dell, how could you!" the girl cried in vexation. "When you know how necessary it is to keep on the right side of Miss Sherburne."

"She hasn't any right side for me," declared the child with abrupt defiance. "Nothing I could do would seem nice to her. She doesn't want me here, and yet she is compelled to have me, and it is cruel to blame me——"

"Hush, Miss Dell. You do not try to make her like you."

"I don't care whether she does or not," and Dell's lip curled scornfully.

"If you had only come home with the other children," said Cassy, "there would have been no great time. But Mar's Ned said they looked for you everywhere."

"It is a lie!" cried Dell indignantly. "I was only at Lizzy's cottage. And Chloe would have sent some one to find me. They hate me—those children. And Ned isn't fair nor square in anything!"

Dell's code of right and wrong had been so extremely simple at the Murrays that her own frankness was prejudicial to her.

Miss Sherburne stood on the side porch, taller and more judicial looking than ever. Dell marched up boldly, defiance in every line of her face.

"How came you to go down to the quarters without permission?" was the sharp inquiry.

"My cousin Edward proposed it," answered Dell with a kind of mimicking insolence. "And if he who has no especial right here, can go where he likes, I cannot understand why I should not, when I am to be mistress of Sherburne House presently."

Miss Sherburne was speechless with indignation. If she had followed her first impulse Dell's cheek would have tingled with a blow. In her young days such a punishment would have followed swiftly. But methods had changed since her girlhood, and she was delicate enough herself to understand the indignity.

"Miss Lyndell Sherburne," she said, with the austerity of a judge, "you will please understand once for all that I have an older right than yours, and that it holds good during *my* lifetime. The hand that signed the unfortunate will giving your father such a heritage, only to be repaid with ingratitude, provided me with a home in *my* father's house so long as I choose to keep it. You never can have *all* the right while I live. I could send you away to school and not allow you to enter this house for the next five years."

"O, I wish you would," cried Dell eagerly. "If you are going to stay here always, I shall hate it worse than ever! *Do* send me to school!"

"Go up to your room immediately. You will not leave it again to-night, and you will have no supper. You *shall* be made obedient and respectful if it takes weeks to do it. A great shameless girl like you, running races with boys and climbing trees, and making yourself an object of ridicule for the very servants! And you are not to go near the quarters. You are not to stir out of the house without permission."

"You have no right to keep me a prisoner."

"Not another word; go!" She caught her by the shoulder and thrust her into the hall. Dell walked with a firm step and held up her head defiantly, though her cheeks were in a blaze. In her own room she threw off her hat, then dropped on the side of the bed and gave way to a paroxysm of laughter that was half hysterical weeping.

Cassy entered and stared at her in surprise.

"Do you suppose she will kill me, Cassy?" the child asked. "Because I would as lief be dead as to live with her forever and ever. Is it true that she must stay here always? Then what good will Sherburne House be to me? I know she will live to be a hundred just to spite me."

There was an ominous silence. Cassy put away her hat, then began to unbutton her boots.

"I'm not going to bed!" cried Dell. "Why, it's daytime. It won't be night for ever so long. And you *can't* make me."

She stood up defiantly.

"Miss Dell, you had better allow me to undress you, or I must call Miss Sherburne."

Dell considered. "Very well," with a dignity that would have done credit to her great-aunt. Cassy disrobed her, brushed out her tangled mat of hair, and then carefully put away her clothes.

"Ask God to make you a better girl when you say

your prayers, Miss Dell," Cassy said as she turned to leave the room. Then Dell heard the click of the lock, and her face was in a scarlet blaze again.

She had climbed two trees. She had run several races; perhaps the sin lay in doing it with Ned. Frances had taken no share in the boisterous sport. And she had talked to Lizzy. Already she liked her better than Cassy. What was there so terrible, since she really had not been forbidden to do any of them?

She wrapped a shawl around her and seated herself one side of the window in a low willow rocker. She had half a mind to don her clothes and climb out of the window. She wondered what rights she really liad. Must she obey Miss Sherburne in everything?

"If I only knew," she ruminated, with a perplexed brow. "Mamma Murray always told me what not to do, and it doesn't seem as if I was so very bad *then*. Oh, my dear, sweet mamma, if I could but fly back to you! And you were all so good to me, and loved me when you might have sent me away. And papa Murray used to carry me in his arms like the good shepherd in the picture. And he never said, 'go 'way, little girl, I have lambs enough of my own.' Oh, my dear papa Murray."

Dell cried for very loneliness and longing. She wanted to feel the fond arms about her, the warm kisses on her lips. Ah, if she could only throw up Sherburne House and go back!

How lovely it all was. The birds were singing slow homeward tunes, or croning to their nest full of little ones. Every pulse of Dell's protested against the cruelty of being shut up here. And she *was* hungry. She had never been denied a meal before in her life! A passion of anger drowned out her tender emotion of a moment ago; so dependent on moods are our best impulses.

Then she bethought herself of a stolen pleasure. She

had brought a book upstairs earlier in the day from a collection in a small library case, that looked as if it might be general property. That she ought to ask, had not then occurred to her. Now she felt quite as if she had outwitted some one, and picked up "Queechy" with a thrill of delight. There she sat and read until a step sounded in the adjoining room, when she crept softly to bed, taking her book. She read until dusk fairly overtook her, then hid her book under the pillow. It was Dell's first real lesson in deceit, and it gave her a feeling of elation rather than guilt.

When Miss Sherburne came to bed she found her in the profound, if rather restless, slumber of childhood. And she sighed over the burthen she had elected to carry.

CHAPTER IX.

BREAD EATEN IN SECRET.

DELL was awake early the next morning. It took her some moments to disentangle the curious impressions. Then she remembered her book and sat up to read it until she heard Miss Sherburne stirring about. However, she went downstairs. Dell read on to the last page and closed the book with a sigh. Then she thought it a prudent step to put it out of sight.

She sprang back into bed just as Cassy entered.

"What! not up yet?" asked Cassy in surprise.

"I was sent to bed. I did not know when I would be allowed to get up," she answered demurely.

"Well, you must be quick now."

Dell made no trouble. She generally helped herself largely. She was just in order when Miss Sherburne appeared.

"I hope you have thought over your reprehensible conduct of last evening," said that lady austere, "and truly regret it. You will beg my pardon."

Dell stared in amazement. Then she said in a firm but not ungentle tone,

"I had not been forbidden to go down to the quarters. Ned asked us to, and Frances went."

"Edward if you please," with freezing dignity. "Well, why did you not return with them?"

Dell colored. Surely it was not her fault.

"You quarreled with them at Chloe's cabin and ran away. Where did you go then?"

Dell wondered if she would get Lizzy in trouble. She might have to tell of her other ramble.

"I stopped at a cottage and a woman spoke to me. Then I went over in the pine woods."

"And amused yourself climbing trees?"

"No I did not climb any then."

Dell stood silent for some seconds.

"You were insufferably insolent to me," and there was a bright pink in Miss Sherburne's cheeks.

"I *would* much rather go to school. And I did not know that you had to stay here ——"

"I do *not* have to stay here, Miss Lyndell Sherburne. I have sufficient fortune of my own to enable me to live anywhere else. I stay because the estate would be poorly cared for without my supervision. Perhaps *you* could manage it?" with intense scorn.

"I should send for Mamma Murray," cried Dell, eagerly. "She lived on a farm ——"

Miss Sherburne ground her heel on the floor with rage, she was too lady-like to stamp.

"Never let me hear you mention that woman in such a manner," she said with passionate anger. "Those people shall never enter the house while I am here—I want you to understand that. Sit down in that chair." Dell obeyed.

What was to be done with this contumacious girl? Miss Sherburne was at her wits' end.

The breakfast bell rang. The lady walked majestically toward the door.

"Am I not to have any breakfast?" cried Dell. "You *can* starve me I suppose, but it would be murder. And if you all hate me so why can you not send me to New York? I never was a trouble to——" her voice broke a little—"any one before. When I am grown I will never stay here one day ——"

Miss Sherburne left the room. Dell shed some tears

of anger and bitterness. Presently Cassy came up with a plate of cold biscuits and a glass of milk. No butter and no fruit. Dell felt it very prison-like rations, but she was hungry.

Cassy put the two rooms in order. Miss Sherburne came up and gave her two penitential psalms to learn. Then she dressed herself and locking Dell in went to church.

Dell soon mastered her penance. Oh, what should she do! If she dared ask Cassy to get her the second volume of *Queechy*! She glanced out of the window for a while. Then a thought occurred to her. She stepped cautiously out on the porch roof and in again at Miss Sherburne's window. Her door stood wide open. No one was in sight. Dell slipped down the stairs softly as a mouse and entered the library. She thrust her book in and drew out the other, ran breathlessly upstairs and regained her own room with a thrill of delight.

Cassy came up once and looked in upon her, then sat down in Miss Sherburne's room until that lady returned. Dell hid her book and took up her psalms. She said them properly and Miss Sherburne read her a moral lesson on her wickedness, which Dell resented with much inward bitterness, knowing it totally undeserved.

Her noon meal was bread and a glass of milk. Then she read several chapters in the Bible aloud until Miss Sherburne went to take her siesta. Afterward the Beaumanoirs came over and remained to tea, but Dell was so interested in following the fortunes of poor sad little Fleda that she minded nothing. After tea they all went out to drive and at dusk Dell had finished her fascinating story. She was tired with the enforced quiet and steady reading, and slipped into bed where she soon fell asleep.

"That child is hardened as a stone," Miss Sherburne said to herself. "Nothing makes an impression on her."

But she resolved to keep her under her own eye, to tame her down, as she phrased it. She had ruled slaves and reduced refractory servants to obedience, and the child should not defy her authority.

If she had only made an appeal to Dell's better self, the side that could have been so easily won by a little love. But she did not, could not love her. The girl's mother had stolen away her idol. For Edward Sherburne had been like a child of her very own, dearer to her than any of the girls. She could always see his handsome, sunny face, his gay, tender manner, his affectionate heart. It had been stolen from them by this intriguing thief—she could call her by no better name. And that *her* child must take Sherburne House from the next favorite, was bitter indeed. She would be honest, Miss Sherburne said to herself. She would make no pretence of loving the child, but she would do her duty strictly, quite forgetting how cruel a stepmother duty can be when divorced from love.

It would have gratified her and perhaps have rendered her less rigid had Dell shown any elation over her new home and prospects. But that she should want to return to the Murrays was the most mortifying lack of appreciation, of pride and family dignity. But she *should* be trained to respect it.

“Dell's heart gave a great bound when she understood that she was to be allowed the following morning to go over to the Beaumanoir schoolroom. Truth to tell, Miss Burtis was warmly interested in such an intelligent pupil, though she used a great deal of tact. Dell being so free from personal vanity unconsciously seconded her efforts. She still abhorred the French but took great pains with her Latin.

“Didn't you catch it on Saturday!” said Ned with a sort of triumphant laugh as they were coming downstairs, peering insolently into her eyes.

Dell bestowed upon him a withering look but uttered no word.

That afternoon her patience was sorely tried with Mr. Sterret, who came to give her a music lesson. To make the matter more exasperating for Dell, Miss Sherburne was present. She blundered horribly. Her fingers seemed stiff and clumsy, and she became more and more confused. On the other hand, she knew the letters, lines and spaces, and Mr. Sterret did his best to encourage her.

If Miss Sherburne had been hoping to invent some particular torment for the girl, she had surely found it now. To sit there and practice two mortal hours with those sharp eyes upon her seemed to Dell the very depths of bitter woe. What with the music and the sewing and her lessons, she was allowed no time out of doors save the rides to and fro. It seemed to her some days that she should die of weariness. And the following Saturday she was kept a strict prisoner.

In answer to Miss Burtis' inquiries, three applications had been made. Two were from comparatively young women. The third frankly admitted her middle life and her experience and enclosed references. She had taught fifteen years in a large private school on the confines of Brooklyn.

"I think I shall settle upon this Miss Hendricks," the lady said, comparing the letters. "I want an experienced and sensible person, who has some authority, and is not coming for the pure pleasure of the thing. I will write to her."

Miss Burtis really felt sorry for Dell in the selection. She had a feeling that Dell's training was unfortunate.

For a week there was a sort of armed truce, and neither party overstepped the bounds. The next had more variety. The Beaumanoir children were all excitement

about their summering at Atlantic City where they owned a cottage. Mrs. Beaumanoir was busy with dressmaking and packing, Violet had a guest, and the excitement was quite entertaining to Dell. Oh, what would she do when she was left alone with Miss Sherburne!

It was Saturday morning and Julius brought in the mail-bag. Dell had more than once speculated about her letter. She knew now that Miss Sherburne intended the parting between her and the Murrays to be final, but she sternly resolved to remember them to her dying day.

Miss Sherburne glanced over the letters. There was one for Miss Lyndell Sherburne with a New York postmark. She was so startled that she held it a full moment before she could decide. She could destroy it—she certainly would not be so dishonorable as to read it first in that case—no Sherburne would be guilty of such a despicable proceeding. If she gave it to Dell she would have a right to insist upon seeing it afterward.

“Here is a letter for you”—and she held it out to Dell as if it might be contamination.

Dell's face was scarlet. Her fingers trembled as she took it. Alarm was greater than joy. Almost she wished it had not been written. Then a thrill of delight succeeded.

Miss Sherburne had some that demanded her attention. Dell glanced up timidly. If she only dared go to her room. But she opened it and at Con's well-known hand a joyous smile illuminated her face:

MY DEAR, DEAR DELL: You are a trump, a brick! plucky enough to be a boy! I wish you were here! Bad cess to the fortune that you don't want. And as to missing you, there's the biggest sort of hole everywhere! It doesn't seem like the same house. But hooray! I'm in the high school and Tess was promoted and everybody bewailed you.

As for that she-dragon—how you are going to stand the old thing I don't know. I'd lay a powder train and blow her up some dark night! I'd make life a burden and death a vision of joy. For maybe you've found out that she don't mean you to keep in with us—the ungrateful old cat! She told father there must be no letters, and at first he said yours could not be answered. And when mother said a little bit of a letter might be written, Tess was frightened out of her wits, and did not dare undertake it, but I heard the lion in his den you see, and me name is McFergus. But we know you can't forget us, and some time in the distant future you'll see me marching in. Won't there be a gay old time! Will she order me out with the broomstick? But old maids are simply atrocious. She'll keep you so tight and snug that you'll never be allowed to marry, then they can get the fortune back again. Or she may wall you up in a secret closet, or bury you in a cellar vault. They used to do fearful things in slave times, and they're a bad lot generally. I doubt if they've got over their queer ways.

O Dell, we want you back. Life is as empty as the coal hod mother pokes at me. You were the jolliest girl I ever knew. Make a big fight, and if the dragon is utterly horrid run away. We'll be glad to take you back and love you with the same old love—pepper and salt thrown in to make it keep. And I'm just crazy to hear again. Maybe she hasn't laid down the law of forgetting your old friends to you. Would it be too terrific to smuggle another letter? Mammy says it wouldn't be right. Maybe she's nearer the head centre of conscience. But we send you thousands of kisses and tons of love, and shall never forget you. Yours to command till death

CON MURRAY.

She drew a long breath. Like a delightful vision the house in Murray's Row opened before her longing eyes. For a moment she forgot her present life.

A shadow seemed to chill the atmosphere.

"Who is your letter from?" seemed almost a knell of doom. A cold stream ran down her back.

"From — from New York," and Dell clutched it tightly, with a quick shiver.

"I did not ask you *where* it was from."

Dell started as if she would fly.

"Give it to me," said Miss Sherburne, authoritatively.

Dell's face was scarlet. Allow her to read Con's emphatic strictures!

"It is mine. And there will not be any more —"

"It is *not* yours in the proper sense. You are holding a clandestine and forbidden correspondence with those detestable Murrays. They have broken their promise, but I did not suppose they possessed any sense of honor. You are in *my* charge, and I have a right to examine your correspondence. If it was an honorable and commendable letter, you would not hesitate.

Dell's breath came quick and hard. She saw the outstretched hand, thin and long like some ghostly intruder, threatening to grasp her. A cold shudder shook her.

She made a sudden dash through the open window. The hand caught at her shoulder, but she jerked away, flew across the porch and over the lawn, never pausing for breath until she was out of sight. Down here was a great hollow tree, the delight of squirrels. Dell took her letter without rereading a word, tore it to bits and dropped it in for the denizens of the woods to weave into their beds. Then she walked slowly back, considering; her heart throbbing at the injustice of thus being cut off from the friends who had a right to her gratitude and love.

Still, if she had waited a week she would not have written. She had a sort of misgiving even then, she remembered. And yet what gave Miss Sherburne this supreme right over her? If Dell only knew the mysterious points, and how far she had any privileges!

She returned boldly. It was better to face the consequences at once. Miss Sherburne sat there upright, severe, the very lines of her face repellent instead of persuasive.

"Have you concluded to obey my proper request?" was the austere demand.

"I can't—I have destroyed the letter. It had something in it for me alone. It would not have been fair for me to—to ——" Dell's breath strangled her.

"You are extremely conscientious," with cutting scorn.

"I want to tell you—I wrote a letter first. I was so wretched and homesick, and I did not understand that we—that I ——"

"You miserable, despicable, underhand girl! You are utterly destitute of honor—as destitute as those low-lived Murrays. You have not *one* virtue that goes to the making of an admirable character. Who mailed your letter?"

Dell was silent.

Miss Sherburne shook her by the shoulder.

"I did not think about it until after it was done. And Con was sorry, but they all said you had forbidden my writing. He coaxed his mother, and she consented just for this time. They will not write again."

"You will not have the letter if they do. And I trusted you—but this ends it."

"But there will be no other letter," Dell said, with a touch of defiance. "This one was my fault."

"Take that for your insolence."

There was a stinging blow on Dell's cheek, and she turned with an indignant passion flaming from her eyes.

"Go to your room at once. You will not leave it again to-day."

Dell did not wait for a second bidding. She flew in a

perfect whirlwind of anger. Once in her own apartment, she stamped her foot on the floor—she would have enjoyed demolishing something.

“You are a hateful, mean old thing,” she cried. “I shall never be sorry again for anything I do. And I shall not care how bad I am or how much I deceive you! Luckily I have a book up here;” and she laughed scornfully. “Just wait until I am grown. I’ll have all the Murrays here and we will raise bedlam about your ears. And I’ll go up to New York whenever I like. Oh, if I *could* run away! If I was a boy I could walk and beg,” and she sighed over the lost opportunity to distinguish boyhood.

A little before noon she sat reading very composedly when the Beaumanoir carriage drove up. A tall, good-looking young fellow sprang out, then a slim, graceful girl, Violet and Cecil.

“That must be Leonard,” she said, with a new interest. He had dark, curling hair and a bright complexion; a pleasant voice and laugh.

“Dear Aunt Aurelia,” he cried. “You do look worn. I have been hearing about this new importation. Was she very fresh from the bogs?—or, let me see—it’s squatter sovereignty up there in New York. Did you find her driving the geese or tending the goat, and is her brogue very decided?”

Dell did not catch the answer, but her face was in a flame again. The reply was low, all the voices were lower indeed. Perhaps they left her for more genial topics. Pleasant laughs floated up to her. Then they went in to dinner.

Hers was sent up to her. If Cassy suspected the books were contraband, she was discreetly blind. She had come to feel curiously sorry for Dell, and yet she blamed her too. She was too outspoken, too uncompromising. Her simple life had been deficient in the

training that prepares one for emergencies, and tact did not come naturally to her.

In truth her heart was filled with bitterness as she ate her bread, thinking of the table downstairs, the delicacies and the fruit, while hers seemed indeed prison fare. They were feasting, they came here and had the best of everything, while she, the true mistress, had no rights.

Suddenly an exultant thought stirred her soul.

Sherburne House *was* hers. She had been wild enough to plan restoring it to her cousin, but now a different resolve awoke within her. No, he should never have it. And when she was grown they should not come here at all.

She remembered there was a dish of fruit in Miss Sherburne's room. She darted out of her window in a sort of insolent glee, and into the other, picked out some of the choicest pears and nectarines, and stole back again, enjoying her feast without a bit of compunction; she who a month ago would have asked Mamma Murray for the merest thing.

They all went into the cool parlor after dinner. Dell grew drowsy over her book and fell fast asleep. The lawn was largely in shade and the breeze much cooler when she was roused by Cassy calling her name.

"Miss Dell," she said, "you may be dressed and come downstairs."

Dell rubbed her eyes and glanced around.

"I am to stay here all day," she said stiffly. "Miss Sherburne shall see that I can obey to the letter. No, don't come near me! Don't dare to touch me. I will not be dressed and shown up like a wild beast," she declared tempestuously.

Cassy looked at her gravely, "Miss Dell," she said, "if I were you, I should be glad of an opportunity of getting back so easily. Miss Sherburne was very angry

this morning, but young ladies do not write letters without any check or guard. And when you had been forbidden ——”

“I wasn’t forbidden until afterward.”

“But you kept it quite to yourself.”

“And I shall keep anything to myself that I don’t choose to tell,” was the defiant answer.

“And Miss Sherburne found out who took the letter. If Julius should do such a thing again he will be discharged.”

Dell was raging with anger but she shut her lips with an unpleasant firmness.

“Come, Miss Dell ——”

“I am *not* going downstairs, Cassy. I will not go down to be looked over and sneered at. I heard Master Leonard, as you call him, ask how much brogue I had ;” and in spite of anger the tears flooded Dell’s eyes.

“But Miss Milly wishes to see you. You cannot help liking her.”

“Then I will not go for that reason. I do *not* want to like any of them.”

In vain Cassy persuaded. Dell was resolute. So the handmaid left her to herself. No one came near her. No supper was sent up to her. Downstairs some one played beautifully, and there was singing that moved Dell to tears, almost broke her heart. She felt so desolate and forlorn, and presently cried herself to sleep. When she finally roused, the house was still and dark.

Miss Sherburne took no further notice of her than to call her the next morning. She went to church. Dell sat on the veranda, and studied “my duty to God and my duty to my neighbor,” and Miss Sherburne branched into a short lecture. But there was not even the walk with Cassy. It seemed to Dell that she would fly in pieces.

Miss Hendricks was to come on Tuesday. Dell was glad and thankful, for Monday seemed the longest day she had ever known.

Miss Hendricks was not the kind of a woman to win a child's favor at a glance. She was forty or thereabouts, a rather sharp-featured person who wore near-sighted glasses over prominent bluish-black eyes. She had a thin metallic voice, and an extremely straightforward manner. Miss Sherburne thought her admirably calculated for her position, and her pupil. She explained at some length Dell's character, and the disabilities as she considered them.

"She has had no sort of training. And you cannot allow her to go unwatched a moment."

Miss Hendricks had already a wide experience with girls—some quite unmanageable ones. She felt herself equal to any emergency, yet she hardly counted on having a savage to tame.

"Your governess has arrived," Miss Sherburne announced to Dell. "I wish you to consider these weeks quite in the light of a punishment. There was no reason why you should not join your cousins for their summer holiday, boating, bathing and amusing yourselves, except that you are too lawless, too insolent and untrustworthy, to say nothing of your deceit and your passionate temper. You would prove a disgrace to any well-regulated household. And you are so deficient in the usual attainments of children of your age that you have not a day to lose."

Dell winked a suspicious moisture from her eyes, and her whole soul protested against this sweeping denunciation. It was so terribly untrue. Why, in some branches she stood on a par with Violet. And no one had ever considered her so base before. She felt the injustice keenly.

She and Miss Hendricks eyed each other warily.

They went to the schoolroom, and after putting a few questions the teacher found her pupil not quite benighted. Then they returned to the parlor and the piano, and Miss Hendricks seated herself near by.

The fingering was the burthen of Dell's life. Mr. Sterret was very particular, and as yet it was a torment to her. Absolute rhyme, rather than rhythm, was her delight. If she only dared pick out a tune, but her one attempt had called down Miss Sherburne's wrath.

Certainly the child had a rough sort of perseverance. And she was not the ignoramus she had been represented.

"Stop and rest your hand a little," said Miss Hendricks. "You play by main strength and tire yourself. Tell me where you went to school in New York."

Dell's face warmed to a pleasant surprise as she answered quite at length.

"Did you like mathematics?"

"Oh, so much," cried Dell eagerly. "And history and philosophy and physical geography."

"And the languages—are you interested in them now?"

"I do not really mind the Latin. Some words have such a grand sound. But the French I hate!" viciously. "And how one is ever to twist up one's lips and talk through one's nose and give it a twang—I don't try, I never shall."

"That is an excellent reason for the failure, but not so good a reason for the pupil. And about the music?"

"Oh, if I could really play! But to have your fingers and thumbs chasing up and down the keys, getting in each other's way, tumbling and sprawling about, is so ridiculous! I can never learn;" in despair, with a curious latent satisfaction that betrayed her obstinacy.

"Now begin again. Lightly—a skip rather than the thud. That is better."

Dell smiled a little and really tried. It was pleasant to have a human being near who could tell you what to do without incessant faultfinding.

Whatever romance Miss Hendricks might have entertained about teaching in the earlier days had died out completely. It was now a mere matter of business. Her present aim was to save up money enough to live upon comfortably as she neared sixty. She had two married brothers and one sister, with families of children who rather derided their old maid aunt, with the careless audacity of youth. Moulding and shaping young minds and souls, and glorious opportunities to train them to noble ends, no longer stirred her. She was hired at so much a year to teach a certain amount of knowledge, even if it took a sort of mental surgical skill to apply it. And she was successful, more so than many with higher aims. Her class was always ready for promotion. Rigid as she was in outward observance of rules, she had a certain versatility in her methods that brought about the desired results.

She had come to Sherburne House simply for the opportunity of devoting six weeks to earning money instead of spending it. She would have a change ; and surely teaching *one* child could not prove a severe drain.

If there had been a little enthusiasm, a little care for higher claims of human souls, Dell might have improved rapidly. But Miss Hendricks soon learned that appreciation of the child was not the way to the favor of the Mistress. Since her being here was only incidental, she would not espouse either side, and she could be severely non-committal.

They began lessons the next morning. An hour in the afternoon was to be devoted to French. And even here Miss Hendricks managed to be interesting. She related a bit of French history, an anecdote of some

heroic person that roused Dell to desire a nearer acquaintance.

Every afternoon they took a walk. Certainly Miss Sherburne was greatly relieved, and yet curiously dissatisfied. There was no complaint of Dell. She was grave and orderly at the table. She attended to her duties and made no trouble.

As they came back from their walk one afternoon she saw the veranda full of the Beaumanoir family. There had been considerable coming and going, but now they were here to tea evidently.

Dell drew Miss Hendricks around to the side porch. All her old belligerency that had somehow subsided was roused in a moment.

Cassy was in her room waiting for her. A white dress and sash were laid out on the bed.

"O Cassy," she cried beseechingly, "must I go down? I would rather be shut up in my room."

"Miss Dell, please don't make any trouble," entreated Cassy. "They are all going to-morrow and you won't see them again for two months or so. And now when everything is running smoothly ——"

Dell submitted ungraciously. The bright face clouded over and settled into repellent lines.

However, the supper bell rang just as she was ready to go downstairs. She was briefly introduced to the two cousins she had not seen. Mr. Beaumanoir nodded kindly to her.

The conversation was principally about the summer exodus and Mrs. Lepage's being abroad. The two sons were to join their cousins at Atlantic City; Major and Mrs. Stanwood were expected from the West late in the season, and there seemed a prospect of much visiting at Sherburne House. Nothing took in the little heiress, sitting quietly at her supper. Her own loneliness touched her with a keen bitterness and

brought the contrast with the joyous meals at the Murrys.

"Do you have to go back to your room?" asked Frances pertly as they went through the hall.

"Not if she behaves properly," said Miss Sherburne at her very elbow. "You children may go out on the lawn."

"Do you like your new governess?" was the next query.

"Yes;" laconically, her pulses rising in tumult.

"I shouldn't. She's awful cross looking. Auntie said it was a punishment. You might have gone with us, for you *are* our cousin——"

"I don't want to. I wouldn't for the world!" flung out Dell savagely.

"You have never been to Atlantic City in your life. And those Murrys did not own a boat!"

Frances had hit both facts correctly.

"I have been to other places," said Dell sharply.

"Where?"

"I don't choose to tell you."

"Hillo!" cried a laughing voice. "Let me into the thick of the fray. Come out here, I want to inspect you, my new cousin," and Leonard Beaumanoir threw his arm about Dell. "I want to see what kind of an unregenerate savage you are! You are pretty solid, anyhow."

Dell made a strenuous effort to release herself, but the clasp had a power beyond her.

"You are my prisoner, and I am the strongest," with a light laugh, as he glanced down into her eyes, gleaming with passionate fire. "Why, you look as if you could eat a body! I ought to do the hating. I am the one who has lost his castle in Spain, his Fortunatus purse, who has been despoiled, who sits in the ashes of undying regret because you rose up from the nether-

most world. And if I am generous enough to forgive you ——”

“I don’t ask you to forgive me,” cried Dell, with ill-suppressed fury. “I did not want to come! I hate Sherburne House! But it never was yours. It was my own papa’s!”

“Well, *you* stood in the way. And I take it philosophically while you go into a tearing passion,” he rejoined, with tormenting coolness.

“I wanted to give it back to you at first. I asked papa Murray if I could not. Then I should have stayed with them. But now you shall never, never have it. I would” — how could she destroy it? — “I would burn it down first!”

“Whew! If you haven’t a temper! Why, I do not know as you are safe to be at large. Is it your fiery golden hair, or your race ——”

“I am *not* Irish!” cried Dell wrathfully, “but I know of some Irish people I love a million times better than I could love any of you! And my own mamma was an Englishwoman.”

“How *did* you come by the temper?”

Fanny giggled. Dell made a tremendous effort to free herself. Millicent came toward them.

“Leonard, don’t torment the poor child,” she entreated.

“Poor child! Well, that *is* good. The richest heiress in the county. We were discussing the nature of the feud between the Montagues and the Capulets. Upon my word, I don’t envy Aunt Aurelia such a ter-magant.”

Millicent took her hand. “Let her go, Leonard,” she said imperatively.

“I haven’t inquired into the strawberry mark. What if she should turn out an impostor?”

This time Dell wrenched herself free. The violence

sent her into Millicent's arms with such force that the elder staggered. But the arms closed about Dell, who gave one long, shuddering sob.

"My dear child—" and the voice was softly persuasive.

But it was too late for Dell to accept the olive-branch. She stood up straight, her eyes flashing, her face set with bitter determination.

"I know you all hate me," she cried passionately. "And I hate you. When I am a woman not one of you shall enter Sherburne House."

Then she ran swiftly indoors, up to her own room, tore off her dress with frantic haste and made one plunge into the bed lest she should be sent for. It was not the first time she had forgotten her prayers.

Ned came up to the veranda with an account of the fray.

"I am thankful she had the sense to go to her room," said Miss Sherburne. "What a dreadful trial that child will be!" The tears fairly came into her eyes.

"You *must* send her away, that is all about it. The idea of threatening to burn the house down! Why it is *not* safe to have her here. How is the governess?"

"She manages her admirably. I really thought she had begun to improve. O Laura, if I could only find some trace of Edward in her! He was such a sweet-tempered, agreeable child, always doing the things that pleased you. Sometimes I am quite certain she cannot be his daughter."

Miss Sherburne wiped her eyes. She was deeply, terribly disappointed. Seeing Millicent had brought a vision of what such a daughter would be to Sherburne House. And there was no hope of it.

CHAPTER X.

THE LONG, LONG THOUGHTS OF YOUTH.

MISS SHERBURNE was away nearly all of the next day. She was more austere and distant; chilly to the girl, whom she gave mostly over to the governess. And though Miss Hendricks was rather rigorous, she was not a hard taskmistress. Dell was bright and eager on most days, but there were times when she tried even her trained patience. She could not understand that Dell studied from a kind of feverish activity because there was nothing else to interest her restless mind. Then she dropped down from sheer weariness of heart and brain, the despair that comes with utter isolation from proper companionship. There were times when she wanted to run and scream, to climb trees, to race with the squirrels, to wade in the brook! She envied the little darkies at the quarters, she longed for a glimpse of Lizzy with a tormenting passion that almost led her to disobey.

She took walks with Miss Hendricks, but that person was not fond of country ways, and had a fear of freed slaves rambling around lawlessly. Occasionally they drove out with Miss Sherburne.

She could talk about New York when they were alone, a sort of sweet, sad gratification. How she longed for it! If she were only a boy, and could start off on a tramp! She dreamed it over. She familiarized herself with every step of the way. The through route passed some twenty miles eastward. The branch road had stations all along. There was one reached by a short

cut through the woods. Of course a boy running away would take that direction.

Ah, if *she* only had some money she might try it. The thought was exhilarating. She would be brought back—locked up—perhaps then sent to school. She had a feeling that the Murrays would not consider it quite the right thing, but she would see them and there would be all the fun and excitement. Alas! She had only two dollars and ten cents. There was no way to earn money, and no one to give her any. Perhaps at Christmas—but that was a long distance to look ahead.

Oh, how could she endure years and years of this awful life! And when the Beaumanoir children were home it was worse. Frances was so tormenting. And Ned was a sneak. She was quite sure of that. Oh, if Con could only punch his head once!

So the days went on wearily. And one afternoon when they had decided to go into town, Dell was saucy about something and left behind in Cassy's charge. She had not been there since the day of her first coming.

She sat on the porch with a double portion of French verbs that were seasoned with bitter tears; the droning hum of the bees, and the slowness, but alas not the sweetness of honey; the soft winds that relaxed every pulse, and made her feel weak and drowsy until her mind wandered with no purpose or energy. What made life seem such a burden? Would she ever be a glad, bright girl again, pleased with everything?

Some one came up the path on horseback. She recognized the thin gentlemanly figure, the long, pale, picture-like face, though this warm afternoon it had a tint of color. She had only seen Mr. Whittingham twice since the journey, and then merely to speak. Now she ran down the steps eagerly, glad of anything to break her sombre thoughts.

"Ah," he said, dismounting and giving her his hand. "Are you quite well? You look rather pale."

"Do I? Well, I am always too red. And I hope I shall grow thin some time."

He smiled. "Now, *I* am hoping to grow stouter."

"It would improve you," she said, with the frank directness of a child, that amused him greatly. "They are all out," she announced as Julius led his horse away.

"They?" inquiringly.

"Miss Hendricks—did you know I had a governess? And Miss Sherburne. They have gone into town."

"Yes"—in answer to her first query. "Do you make life a burthen to her? It is about another governess that I have come. We—that is, my sister—heard of an opportunity."

"I want to go to school. Are you really my guardian, and can't you do—" hesitating.

"My powers are somewhat limited. Still, I *have* proposed the school. Your aunt objects."

"I should think she would be glad to get rid of me. Do you know they all hate to have me here?"

He stared in amazement. "You should not make such an assertion," he said gravely.

She laughed defiantly. "Oh, but I *know*." Then her brow knit thoughtfully. "Will you please tell me if Miss Sherburne must live here always—even when I am a woman?"

"She has what is termed a life right in the place. It was an old-fashioned way of eking out a daughter's portion. So, of course, she can live here as long as she chooses. And she has never known any other home. You surely wouldn't want to turn her out if you could."

Put in that light, Dell felt that she could not even turn an animal out homeless.

"I hope you are getting quite domesticated. Do you not like it here?"

"No, I don't," replied Dell frankly.

"But, at least——"

"And when I am grown, I shall go away. I will not stay with her. How rich am I? Leonard said I was the richest girl in the county."

"You will be rich enough to go anywhere. But I hope then you will desire to remain." This was rather uncomfortable ground. He picked up her book and asked if she liked to study.

"Sometimes," she answered laconically, as her eyes followed the swift, brilliant dazzle of a fire bird as he cut the air. Ah—if she had wings. Somewhere she had read:

I would I were a bird or bee,
Or anything that I am not,

and she elected to be the bird.

Such a soft, wistful tenderness flooded her eyes. He remarked then how clear and beautiful they were. He had seen them under rather wretched auspices, swollen with weeping and set in red rims, with flushed cheeks beneath them. Had she improved? She was not so very plain. Her complexion was fine, rather pale now, and her mouth dimpled at the corners very easily.

"About the governess; do you like her?"

"I suppose she is well enough. But Miss Burtis is nicer, only I'd rather have *her* all to myself."

"Well, you can have this one all to yourself. She is very accomplished, a Southern woman. A friend who has been visiting us felt quite certain Miss Sherburne would be pleased with her. And if you cannot go to school—you *will* try to be content?"

"I am homesick, always. There is no one to love me.

They tolerate me because they must, but they hate to have me here. And Leonard said I had taken the place away from him ——"

"Had he no better sense than that?" Mr. Whittingham's placid temper was roused. "It never was his. If you had died, if you should die now, there is a family agreement that he shall have it. But you will live and enjoy it."

"I haven't cared, sometimes, but I want to, now. And in eight years I shall be free and do just as I like. But oh, the months are so long. I never knew such weary days," and her voice saddened pathetically.

He felt extremely sorry for her. He was unused to girls, and he realized dimly how great the change must have been to her. Down in his secret heart he thought it would have been wiser to allow her to correspond with her old friends. To be cut off from all she had enjoyed must be hard indeed. There was a long silence. He did not want to be drawn into any unfavorable comment, but wondered what he could say to comfort her. Her thoughts had run off into another channel. In a rather slow, speculative way she said half-inquiringly: "If there is so much money it seems as if I might have a little now."

"Does not your aunt give you some pocket money?"

"No. Papa Murray did, when we had been good. And I used to earn some. Then we could buy what we liked with that money."

"What would you buy now?" he asked rather jocosely.

"I can't just tell. Only I would like to have some. I could save it for Christmas."

"So you could, so you could. I must arrange with Miss Sherburne for you to have an allowance."

"But she would keep that," returned Dell gloomily. "It wouldn't be any pleasure to me."

"You couldn't tell me of anything you would like to buy? I might bring it to you."

"No," Dell answered with a sigh.

"Well, how much would you like?"

Dell's heart leaped up to her throat, and her ears rang as if she were miles under the sea.

"You don't really mean ——" Then Dell's conscience smote her. After all was she not a miserable, deceitful little wretch? No, he must not give it to her. Her tongue seemed stiff. There was a constriction in her throat; a strange flutter through her pulses.

Her emotion touched him. He took out his wallet and fingered the bills.

"I am going to trust you to do nothing harmful to yourself," he said gravely, "nothing that will get either of us into trouble," and he smiled a little. "It may be a pleasure to have it when you are going somewhere. And if it doesn't demoralize you, another time I may try it again."

The bill fluttered to her lap.

"Oh, thank you! Thank you, a thousand times. I shall keep it—until Christmas, maybe."

Just then the carriage, with the two ladies, wound around the drive. Dell sat in a sort of speechless amazement, happy beyond measure, then with a secret sense of guilt. Her hand closed over it. Five dollars, all her own!

Mr. Whittingham rose and went down to meet the ladies, Dell picked up her book and vanished through the hall, flying up to her own room. Oh, she *could* get enough some time—by Christmas, perhaps. If she could walk into the old home on Christmas Eve! Ah, she could fancy the shout of joy.

Cassy came up with Miss Sherburne's mantle. Miss Hendricks looked in.

"How is the French?" she asked.

"I have been talking to Mr. Whittingham, but I will finish it in a few moments. Shall I come to the school-room?"

"No, you will find me on the side porch with my book. I wish you could have gone with us—it was very entertaining. And, Miss Lyndell, if you only had a little more tact, you would get on so much better with your aunt."

Dell made no reply. She was overjoyed with the result of her enforced stay at home. But what *could* she do with her precious money? She had kept her two dollars in various places, but now that it had increased she must render it doubly safe, for its loss would be irrep-
arable.

Mr. Whittingham meanwhile was discussing Mrs. Fanshawe. She had been spending the summer abroad, having charge of some young ladies, and would reach home about the middle of September. Her husband had been killed in the war. She was about thirty, highly accomplished, and desired an engagement in a family of growing girls. As he had relatives in Washington, she preferred to be as near them as possible.

After Mr. Whittingham had performed his duty to Mrs. Fanshawe and his sister's conscience, he made a very earnest plea that Lyndell should be sent away to school.

"No school that we could approve would keep her three months," said Miss Sherburne contemptuously. "She would run away and find refuge with the Murrays, or carry on a clandestine correspondence with them, such as she attempted here. No, I shall do my whole duty by her, until that is made impossible for me. She is not fit to be trusted out of one's sight."

Mr. Whittingham hated to argue with a lady, and he felt assured that he could not move Miss Sherburne.

"I suppose you will be going away presently. You surely do not mean to keep her to lessons all summer?"

"She has run wild long enough. Oh, a few lessons will not hurt her. Her health is of the rudest sort. It will take years of discipline to tone her down. I sincerely hope she has not been complaining to you?"

"Indeed, she has not," answered the gentleman warmly. Then he rose.

"You will surely remain to supper?"

"Not this evening, my dear madam. I promised it to Mrs. Kirby and her friends. And shall I say you will come over presently?"

"In a day or two, yes. And I am indebted to her and to you for this thoughtfulness."

"You will always find me ready to do whatever is for the best," said he graciously.

Miss Sherburne went upstairs when her visitor had gone, firmly resolved to keep Dell under her own eye. It was so great a trial it wore the aspect of a virtue.

Dell's lesson was such a triumph that Miss Hendricks sent her out for exercise. She stationed herself on the side porch, as she had orders not to lose sight of her. Perhaps she fell into a reverie, perhaps she had no antipathy to violent exercise. For Dell suddenly gave way to an olden mood. She laughed, she ran, she even indulged in a surreptitious whistle. She swung her arms and gave a tremendous flying leap. Then a wild breezy rush, until her arms seemed wings and her feet light as thistle down. Oh, it was glorious!

Miss Sherburne glanced from her window. Was that Dell, careering round like a wild Indian when she had been forbidden to indulge in such pastimes!

"Miss Hendricks," she said sharply, "will you go and call Miss Lyndell! One would think she had been brought up among savages by her antics down there in the grass."

Miss Hendricks walked away slowly, a half smile curving her lips.

"We shouldn't suit in 'the long run,'" she thought. "A child with that sort of physique needs vigorous exercise if you have no gymnasium. How fussy people do grow! At her time of life one should have nothing to do with children."

"You have made yourself red in the face, Miss Dell, and oh, what a Medusa head!"

Dell shook her tawny mane. "It doesn't really resemble snakes," and she laughed. "How curious and delightful mythology is! But I've had such a good time!"

"And your aunt saw you."

"Who cares! Come down to the brook, and I'll bathe my face and have a jump over. Oh, do!"

She did not resist the eager voice. Dell had her jump—four of them, and luckily did not splash in. She wiped her face on her handkerchief, and the two walked decorously back.

"I am ashamed of you," declared Miss Sherburne, who stood awaiting them. "Sit down here, and do not stir until supper time."

Dell dreamed over the episode of the afternoon. Was it really true?

The further tidings concerning Mrs. Fanshawe were eminently satisfactory.

"I shouldn't keep such a person as this Miss Hendricks very long, even if I could. She has no sort of style, though she is an excellent teacher. And Miss Lyndell will need a great deal of training to make her presentable."

"How good you are to take so much pains with her," sighed Mrs. Kirby softly.

Miss Sherburne had promised to spend a week with the Beaumanoirs. She also wanted to go up to Phila-

delphia and do some autumnal shopping. Of course Dell would run wild while she was gone, but she really would not dare trust her alone with Cassy. Miss Hendricks was to go the last of August. Her own school opened the 10th of September.

Dell heard the tidings with outward gravity, but the wildest kind of a heart-beat. She really was on her best behavior for two days. If she had suspected that Miss Sherburne almost decided to take her! But she had so exaggerated Dell's boisterous ways to herself that she felt she could not endure the mortification.

There were charges innumerable, "shalt nots" enough to fill twenty decalogues. But at last she went, with a reluctant step and a severe good-bye. She needed the change sorely—her nerves had been so rasped and worn.

There was no difference in the lessons or the music practices. But there was a walk or a drive every day. Dell thought she liked the walks best. And on Saturday they followed the path through the woods in a northeasterly direction. The creek, which was but a mere winding thread down by the house, widened out here, and in one place made a sedgy pond full of watery growths. How still and cool it was!

"Where does Sherburne end?" asked Miss Hendricks, glancing sedately around.

"Ever so far over. There is a road that goes on to Croziers—a station. The truck wagons use it, I believe. And there is a little sort of hamlet."

"Of poor whites, I suppose. They live on the outside boundaries. And more must be over to the west there."

They asked Cassy that evening. "The path," she said, "took one over to the road. Just below, another branched off, and that one led to Croziers. There were a number of stations before you reached Staunton, where the branch connected with the main line to Washington."

"I have never been farther south than Washington until now," said Miss Hendricks. "A place like this does well enough in summer, but I like the stir and enterprise of Northern cities. I never want to live very far from New York."

Dell sighed. Ah, if she were only going with Miss Hendricks.

The next day she studied up a railroad guide. Would she dare the walk on a cold winter day? But maybe it would take her a year to get enough money. Still it was a delightful air-castle. And though she would surely be brought back, the flight captivated her fancy, that had so few real pleasures to feed upon.

Didn't people sometimes pray for things they wanted very much? She did not stop to consider the propriety of praying for a thing she knew was not quite right. She thought over the miracles. People prayed for the very things they desired. *Did* they pray to be made better? Was it not for sight, and life, and relief from lameness, and physical good? And in story books when people were in the last extremity of starvation or trouble or sorrow they prayed for help or money, the thing they most needed.

"And I am starving to see my dear Mamma Murray," she cried softly. "One's heart may starve as well as one's body. And no one has offered me a crumb of love since I have been at Sherburne. It can't really be wrong to pray for it. And if it is—why God won't send it," she concluded hopefully.

How bright and joyous Dell had grown. Always a smile and a cheerful word. Cassy began to doubt Miss Sherburne's method of such sharp repression. She was kindly indulgent to the Beaumanoir children, and indeed all the others.

"We can have one more walk," said Miss Hendricks on Monday. "To-morrow your aunt will be home.

You deserve a good deal of praise for your efforts at the French, and you do improve in fingering. You must try harder for the things you do not like. I have found you a much brighter pupil than I expected. I hope your new governess will take a decided stand in some matters ; I should if I were going to stay."

Dell thrilled at the words of praise.

"Oh, I wish you were," she cried.

"I should quarrel with Miss Sherburne, and be dismissed. There, go for your hat."

Their walk was in a southerly direction this time. The ground rose gradually—there was a bit of mountainous ledge. From here you could see the river winding its placid length in silvery curves ; the great bay over eastward, the dim suggestion further beyond of sky and ocean meeting. All the undulating country spread out like a panorama. Famous battlefields, cities arising from their ruin, or new ones coming into existence, prosperity where once there had been havoc and desolation.

Dell ranged like a deer. She had two rather amusing tumbles, and tore her gown. Miss Hendricks unbent from her severe dignity, for the child's gayety was infectious. Surely Miss Sherburne's method was not a wise one for such a temperament. She began to pity Dell sincerely.

"I don't know what your aunt would say to see you now," and Miss Hendricks gave an amused laugh. Her hair was blown about, her face and hands stained by berry gathering and eating, and her eyes were brilliant with enjoyment.

Even after they reached home she could not subside into decorum. "She will have enough of it after tomorrow," thought the governess. She did not check Dell, as she went dancing up and down the paths. There was no one to be disturbed by her wild vagaries.

The child went hopping along, first on one foot then

on the other until presently she threw herself on the soft turf that was rich with fallen leaves. A little tuft of something attracted her attention. Two or three brown-red leaves clustered together like a tulip cup. A loose greenish centre stood up waving its edges faintly in the breeze. Of course it wasn't a flower, but it was curious. She rose to inspect it. She had examined so many strange things this afternoon. No, it was not a half dead blossom. The leaves had whirled around until their stems were caught together. Tangled with them was—her very heart stood still. Yes, it really was money. Three five dollar greenbacks. Was this a miracle? Had her prayer been answered?

Dell dropped down on the grass again, breathless, overcome by a strange bewildering emotion. Yes, they were really bills. The outside one felt soft and wet, as it must have been in the dew overnight. Had it lain there all day? How mysterious that she should have seen it just now, when she had passed a dozen times that way.

"Miss Lyndell," called a voice.

Dell rose. Her limbs trembled under her, and she felt dazed. Could she meet the glance of any eyes?

"You have been out long enough," said Miss Hendricks. "I wonder that you can stand. You will be as stiff as a post in the morning. And you are just in the state to take a little cold. I should be sorry to have you suffer by my over-indulgence."

"I am a little tired," said Dell faintly.

"Cassy had better give you a bath and put you to bed. There, good-night."

Dell drew a long breath. She would feel better in the dark with her secret. Every nerve was quivering.

She managed to slip the money under the pillow before Cassy entered.

"Miss Dell, what *is* the matter with you?" the

woman said presently. "You act as if you were bewitched. You have run too much. I am afraid you *do* need Miss Sherburne's oversight."

Dell endeavored to get herself under better control. But she was glad to bury her flushed face deep in the pillow. How wonderful that *she* and no one else had seen the money. But she soon fell asleep, and no thought of it haunted her dreams. Physical fatigue was a refreshing draught.

CHAPTER XI.

BRINGING A DREAM TO PASS.

DELL awoke with a peculiar impression. She seemed to have been wandering in some strange fairyland where all her wishes were gratified, where she was loved and caressed. The vague remembrance puzzled her. She sat straight up in bed and glanced questioningly at the opposite wall.

Was it a dream? She thrust her hand under the pillow. There was the roll—three bills, rather musty-smelling and faded by the damp. The winds might have blown them about anywhere, the rains beaten them to a pulp under continued exposure. It was quite a miracle that her eyes had been directed toward them.

She sprang out of bed and thrust them in the cover of a book. None too soon, for Cassy entered to perform her toilette offices.

"To-day Miss Sherburne comes home," she exclaimed. "And oh, Miss Dell, I only hope matters will go smoothly."

Dell laughed. She was so light-hearted. Some time after breakfast Miss Hendricks was hunting around in a flurried sort of fashion. "Oh," cried Dell in sudden agitation, "what have you lost?" Her heart sank like lead. Her beautiful miracle vanished. She struggled heroically to confess—not merely that she had found the money, but that she had been base enough not to return it instantly.

"My paper knife. I used it in the magazine, I am

sure. I wonder where I can have mislaid it. I hate slipshod carelessness quite as much as Miss Sherburne."

"Oh, is that all?" Dell tried to collect her scattered wits.

"Yes, Miss Lyndell, I am glad to say that is all. I do not wish to fall in Miss Sherburne's estimation for so small a thing as that. And it was a gift from one of my pupils."

"Oh, I remember!" Dell ran swiftly downstairs. Yes, there it lay with some pamphlet music. Then it was not the money! Was she glad or sorry? There was a great confusion in her mind. Perhaps she would learn to whom it belonged, and be able to return it.

"Here is your cutter. You left it on the piano," she said, returning quietly.

"Oh, yes. Thank you. I might have remembered."

Dell stood there in a curious mood. She ought to tell some one about the money. Her conscience was uneasy.

"There, I have all my small belongings," with a sigh of relief. "And now it is school time. Get your French; I'll give you a day in, as you are so fond of study," and Miss Hendricks laughed.

Dell was relieved to have something to do. Her brain was in a ferment, her temples throbbed, and she lost her recent steadiness.

"You ran too hard yesterday. Well, you shall be excused a little. I shall not be rigorous on my last day."

"If I could only get the little quips and quirls of sound," said Dell, with rather rueful longing.

"You have done unusually well. You cannot get it all in six weeks—some girls could not acquire it in six years. I am afraid you have been kept rather too close, but as your new governess cannot come immediately, you will have a little rest. I should like to hear from

you, but I am afraid your aunt would hardly allow a correspondence. Still I shall often think of you, and in some future time you may revisit New York. I am likely to remain in Brooklyn for years to come ; so, if you have an opportunity, hunt me up. I have had a very interesting six weeks. And I shall not preach you any high moral sermons. When matters go hard with you, have patience. If you live, and you seem to give every indication of that now, you have an enviable future before you. Try your utmost to fit yourself for it."

"I thank you for a great deal of—oh, what shall I say?" and Dell gave a perplexed smile.

"Appreciation," returned Miss Hendricks decisively. "There are a great many people who still think no good can come out of Nazareth—that an opinion different from theirs must be wrong. But the world is wide, and there is room for no end of opinions. It will not injure you to say that you are above the average in scholarship, according to modern methods. I am afraid you will never be a musical prodigy, but you may learn to play well. I do not see any reason why you may not become a fine linguist. An old Frenchman said, 'Everything comes to him who waits'—I say to the one who works and waits. There, I have finished," and she smiled.

Dell threw her arms around Miss Hendricks' neck. "I like you so much," she cried. "I am so sorry you are going. Oh, I *do* wish you could stay."

"I should not agree with your aunt," she returned dryly. "Now you may go out for a little walk, or perhaps it would be quite as well to swing in the hammock."

There were tears in Dell's eyes as she went. Oh, if Miss Sherburne was going to stay away a month!

As Dell swung in the green sunlighted atmosphere her thoughts recurred to the money. Some one had lost it. The servants and laborers seldom came around to the

front, or crossed the woods in that direction, since they had no real business. If the Beaumanoir family were at home, there would be coming and going. If Julius or Cassy had lost such a sum, or Cato, there must have been an inquiry.

She had a misgiving that it was her duty to announce her finding of it. Yet she had heard Miss Sherburne express such sweeping views of the untruth and dishonesty of the former slaves that she could not be sure of the rightful owner. Then she thought herself that it must have lain some time in the dews and damp. Suppose Miss Sherburne had dropped it the day she went away? She would miss it, of course. It would be better to wait, and Dell resolved if she heard any inquiry she would return the money to the spot where she had first seen it, and find it anew in the presence of Cassy. That would free her from suspicion.

Julius went after Miss Sherburne. Miss Hendricks and Dell sat on the veranda as she drove up and alighted. She greeted the governess, then she turned to Dell:

"I am gratified to find you in decent and respectable order," she began sharply. "I have half-believed you would commit some wild and terrible escapade in my absence. I hope Miss Hendricks can give a passable account of you."

Dell flushed angrily. Even Miss Hendricks was roused to a sort of indignation at the injustice.

"I can give a very good account of her," she answered decisively. "And I should be glad always to have pupils who would give one as much credit and as little trouble as Miss Lyndell."

Miss Sherburne swept through the hall in her stately, dignified fashion, rather amazed at a reply that to her mind savored of impertinence.

"That woman is the perfect embodiment of prejudice and injustice. I do sincerely pity you, Lyndell Sher-

burne," Miss Hendricks said energetically. "I like to see fair play."

Dell sat in a quivering protest. She was continually suspected of escapades then! Well, she had been nursing one that now took definite shape. She hoped with an eagerness that was almost prayer that no one would make inquiries about the money. If she waited a fortnight she could be quite sure. Sitting there with the fragrant air wandering about her temples and gently lifting the rings of soft hair like a caress, watching the sunshine as it crept in and out of the dark pines and lighter beeches, ash, and maple, even the beauty of the scene failed to comfort her. It was her home, yet it would always be made bitter to her while Miss Sherburne lived. Never had she experienced such an aversion to any one. Miss Hendricks' plain but sympathetic face looked beautiful to her.

Certainly the atmosphere of the place was changed. Miss Hendricks rather resented some strictures. She could afford to now, since she was going to-morrow, and she positively enjoyed one or two cutting replies.

Late in the afternoon she was called into the library. Dell sat out on the veranda and could see the picture through the open window.

"I have made out your account for the six weeks' tuition," began Miss Sherburne. "Will you look it over and satisfy yourself of its correctness?"

Miss Hendricks did so and answered affirmatively, with a serene dignity.

"Here is your money. Sign this receipt, please. I always do business in a business-like manner, and Miss Lyndell's expenses have to be accounted for to her guardians."

Miss Sherburne said this very stiffly and expressed no sort of approval or obligation.

Miss Hendricks signed the receipt, counted her money,

and acknowledged the obligation with a grave inclination of the head.

"I trust you will get suited without any trouble," she ventured. "I do not consider the position at all arduous. Miss Dell is an excellent scholar."

"I should expect something quite different for a permanency," was the caustic rejoinder.

Then Miss Sherburne counted her own money and made a memorandum. Surely she had not lost any, commented Dell inwardly. It would have been announced by this time. The lady locked her desk and came out on the porch.

"Do sit still!" she said fretfully to Dell. "You fidget and twist, and drop into such awkward positions. I do wonder whether you will ever be like ordinarily well-behaved girls! Lady-like and refined I never expect to see you."

Dell flushed and her lips trembled with an angry reply, but she did not utter it. She had philosophy enough to understand that it would only make matters worse. She sat stiffly upright, and watched the birds flitting from tree to tree and calling their mates. Ah, if she could fly away some day. There was an uneasy consciousness that she had no right to use the money, even if she kept it until its rightful owner could be heard from. And yet she allowed herself to dream of glowing possibilities that lulled her conscience.

The evening wore away at length. Ah, how dreary and tiresome it was with its sudden lack of buoyancy, its grim, prison-like aspect, its sense of being chained and suspected—of what? Dell had an uncomfortable feeling of wrong. There was nothing actively secretive in her nature.

"Cassy," she said that evening, when she was being put to bed, "did Miss Sherburne find everything right, nothing lost or gone astray?"

"I don't know what could go astray, Miss Dell, except you," and Cassy gave a short laugh. "Maum Dinah is as sharp as Missus herself, when she's away. And I'm sure I have a feeling that her eyes are always on me. She could tell in the dark if anything went wrong. You have had a little easier time—but perhaps it would be as well to keep that to yourself."

Dell resolved to follow the advice in all things. She felt confident now that the money was not Miss Sherburne's, and somehow her conscience was easier.

There was a soft summer rain the next morning, but Miss Hendricks bade them good-bye and started on her journey. However, there was to be no holiday for poor Dell. She had to bring her books to Miss Sherburne's room and go over the week's lessons. There was some carping that exasperated Dell.

Indeed, in the days that followed, Dell lost all she had gained under Miss Hendricks' steady discipline, that was equitable, if not indulgent. The continual strictures made her rebellious and saucy. She was kept in her room and allowed no walks, no diversions. Another punishment was to read aloud from a book of sermons. In her strenuous efforts to reduce the vigorous girl to a sort of languid, lady-like propriety, Miss Sherburne lost sight of a proper regard for health. Dell began to have wild, throbbing headaches that reacted upon her temper; her nerves were distraught to a point beyond endurance.

It was extremely trying for Miss Sherburne as well. A sense of baffled authority pervaded her. She brooded over some sort of punishment that should strike terror to the heart of the offender. She saw in her an unruly, defiant being with no reverence for the traditions that had governed *her* life, no spirit of meek obedience such as she sought to exact. She did not order herself lowly and reverently to her betters. The elder's creed was,

that all young natures should be plastic in the hands of those in authority over them. There was one unalterably right method, the training of good birth and good society, and yet, had she considered her past experience of people, she must have admitted even that did not always bring about the proper result. All of Dell's past had been wrong, and she believed she was doing her duty in trying to uproot it.

If Lyndell had possessed a more facile nature, a compliant sort of yielding under adverse circumstances, her path would have been less thorny. But her face too often showed that she obeyed or desisted from sheer necessity. As soon as she dared, she would throw off the restraint. Her covert defiance seemed to say—"I am only biding my time."

Yet Miss Sherburne wrongly translated it. When this audacious rebel threw down her arms and capitulated, she would show her gentleness and mercy, not before. And Dell had settled to the sad consciousness that nothing she could do would please. She was rebellious and exasperating to the last degree. And when Miss Sherburne found that music practices could be turned into punishment, she added them, to Dell's infinite disgust.

On Thursday two friends of Miss Sherburne's came over to remain all night, and to be taken the next day to the house of a mutual friend, whither Miss Sherburne had planned to accompany them. The music was too annoying, so Dell was sent to her room. This time she had no book. Never in her life had any moments seemed so long. Her head ached, her nerves were wrought up to the tensest strain. She wanted to jump, to scream, to defy everything and everybody.

"You will keep your room all day," announced Miss Sherburne the following morning. "You are not to be trusted an inch. Cassy will bring up your meals, and you will take double lessons in Latin and French."

Then Dell blazed up in a fire of passion. She never remembered what she said, but it was a torrent of pent-up resentment, bitter indignation, and a defiant cry for freedom.

Miss Sherburne was utterly astounded.

"If you go on this way," she said severely, "you will deserve to be sent to some reformatory. No school could be found severe enough for such outrageous behavior. I want you to meditate on your shameful conduct to-day, and I hope to find you alive to some sense of the enormity of it when I return. If not, I shall be compelled to take more stringent measures than any I have hitherto employed."

She shut and locked the door. Dell was in a fury of passion. She kicked her books across the room, she tore her sewing to bits, and then she burst into a wild tempest of tears. What would be done to her? She might be kept a prisoner in some out-of-the-way room. She had once overheard Maum Dinah telling a frightful story of a slave girl being put in a dungeon where the rats gnawed her. Dell sank down, overcome with terror.

A little bread and water came up to her. The negroes in the quarters were reveling in fruit of all kinds, melons, great chunks of cake—and she, mistress of it all, condemned to prison fare! It was cruel, past all endurance!

Oh, why should she not escape? There never could be a better opportunity. Cassy had sat in the adjoining room all the morning, but she would no doubt indulge in a restful gossip with her dinner.

Dell sprang up. Yes, this was the golden moment. She hurried off her dress and put on her fine grey cloth, thrust a few articles into her satchel, buttoned her boots, and stepped out on the veranda roof. No one was in sight. Squirrels were exulting in their freedom, birds

were carolling merry lays. They said—come, come, come ! in their gay invitation.

She swung cautiously down the thick ladder of wisteria vine and reached the ground. Then she ran like a deer over to the pine thicket, where she paused, out of breath and frightened at the swift result of her daring. Could she get away? In imagination she had taken the journey many times. It was to walk over to Croziers and intercept the train. And though her conscience gave her a sharp twinge about spending money that was not really hers, she resolved to ask Mr. Whittingham to restore it fourfold, when the rightful owner could be found.

When she had recovered her breath and steadied her nerves, she began to walk on with rapid steps. Cassy would hardly discover her absence until supper time. She laughed as she thought of their consternation. They would suppose she had run away, and search the grounds—she would be safe in a railroad train !

Oh, how lovely and cool and green ! She drew in great breaths of fragrance. Every pulse leaped with joy. She even broke into a snatch of song, then she bethought herself that some one might hear. She was not afraid, but exulted in her new found liberty. She reached the place where she and Miss Hendricks had paused in their walk, and sat down to rest and consider. Should she be able to find her way over to the Forks—where the roads diverged? What if she should meet some one? What if she should go wrong?

She rose and went on again, coming to a cart path used for hauling logs. Some wood-choppers had been at work, and her breath fluttered in frightened bounds. She crossed this, crossed the creek on the narrow and uneven bridge of rails, and followed the footpath again. How gloomy it was ! Not a bird's voice, only the strident hum of insects. Would she ever get to the

end? And oh, if she should be late for the train! Terror lent her speed.

Yes, here was the open road—the boundary of Sherburne. She climbed over the rude brushwood fence. In the distance she saw an ox team standing still, and she was thankful it was so far behind her. Now she must go on to the Forks.

Dell was growing very tired. Her feet ached, and she felt dreadfully hungry after her light luncheon. But joy—here was where the road branched off.

A woman in a faded sunbonnet was picking the last shrunken berries by the wayside.

"Is this the road to Croziers?" asked Dell.

The sunbonnet flapped affirmatively.

"Is it far?"

"Mile or two." The woman stared stolidly.

Dell kept on. The road was dry and dusty, not as pleasant as that through the woods. Oh, if she did not reach the journey's end soon she should drop! How strange it was! She did not get tired when she and the Murrays went off for a day's tramp.

After an endless while it seemed to her, she came to a straggling collection of houses. A ruinous old mill, a sluggish stream of water and some barefooted children, both black and white, playing about. Over yonder was a low, rambling building with a kind of wide shed. A dozen or two dogs lay around sunning themselves, and several men were tilted back in rude chairs, smoking pipes; their hats pushed to the back of their heads so the flapping brims would not obstruct their view. A dingy sign swung over a watering trough. There in faded lettering was the name—"Croziers."

Was this the station, Dell wondered? Gaining courage, she glanced around. The track ran above. There was a wide platform and a small, rather official looking place, that had the air of being more recent than the

other dilapidated buildings. She walked over with an air of assurance. A heap of negro boys lay half asleep, an old white-haired, very much bent man, hit them with his cane and elicited only growls. The door stood open. The name was above it, "Croziers."

Dell walked in. A rusted stove stood in the centre, in what seemed a great pan of ashes. A bench ran along one side and end, and there were two windows. A middle-aged, extremely shambling sort of man sat nodding, and an old negro woman was twisting herself about in an odd fashion. Dell went over to her with the desire of companionship.

"Has the train gone yet?" she inquired, with a fearful heart-beat. Everything looked as if it had settled down for a lifetime.

"Ca'as—dat wot yo' mean, honey? No, tank de Lawd, I'se gwine in 'em if ebber I fin' dat ar quarter. De good Lawd he shorely ain't gwine to 'sart me w'en I'm bin prayin' stiddy fur dat ar money." Then she shook her rusty old dress, took off a cotton bandanna pinned round her shoulders, turned an old frayed silk bag wrong side out on the bench. There was an old pipe and some tobacco, an orange, a chunk of gingerbread, strings, odd buttons, two handkerchiefs, and a pin cushion.

"Look a yeah, honey, yo' eyes younger'n mine, see'f you cayn't fin' dat quarter rollin' roun' de floor. Ef I don' gon' lost it plum square, er' ef dem plaguey chillen steal it, den I ain't got 'nuff to go to my sister's. She's sick 'n' sent fer me. An' I trus' de Lawd an' pray, an' dat ar quarter come like meracle. An' now it's don' gon'. I had hit jes' afore I started."

A look of distress overspread her queer, wrinkled face. There was a shrill whistle in the distance, and the ticket slide opened with an explosive bang. She looked up and began to cry.

"Get me a ticket to Junction," Dell said, "and get your own out of my money."

The old woman shambled off. Dell watched her with a misgiving, but she seemed to be competent. The agent asked her a second time.

"A ticket fer Junction fer Missy. An' one to Pine Creek."

She came back and dropped a handful of change in Dell's lap as the train came steaming in.

"T'ank ye, Missy," she said quaveringly. "De good Lawd he work noder meracle. He sen' you here jes' like de raben to 'Lijah, when I done lost it.' Oh, Missy, wenebber yo' want anything, yo' jes' pray, an' dough de Lawd he sometimes try yo' faith, he bring it roun' right by de end."

Dell smiled and dropped another quarter in her gnarled and wrinkled hand. How curious that she should have prayed and had a miracle happen to her!

No one but Dell seemed in a hurry. All the faces were strange, even if they did stare at her. The brakeman helped her on. Just as a hoarse whistle rent the air with its warning sound a negro came running down the road waving his hand. Dell's heart stood still. What if it was some one in search of her!

They steamed out. The conductor came and punched her ticket. Through woods and wastes until they reached Pine Creek, where quite a number of passengers entered. No one molested her. She bought two suspicious looking "turnovers" from a boy, for she was almost famished. Several stations were passed with indifferent results, then they reached Junction.

Though more pretentious than Croziers, this was a small place also. The station was very respectable. Dell glanced around fearfully. Passengers were buying tickets. If she asked for a through ticket, would she not be giving a clew by which she could be identified?

While she was considering, her eye caught the figure of a pale little woman who seemed to have more than her hands full. A strong, fat baby was careering in her thin arms, and making frantic snatches at her hat; one little girl clung tightly to her skirt, munching cookies; a boy was swinging a satchel in spite of her entreaties, and she was trying to find her purse. Her strenuous endeavors were almost as bad as those of the poor old colored woman. Something in the troubled face appealed to Dell's ready sympathy. She went over to her.

"Let me take your baby a moment," she said, "until you get your ticket. And if you will get mine—will the train be in soon?"

"Well, 'bout ten minutes now, I guess. When my man left me here it was twenty. He druv over early 'cause he had to see a man at Perkinses. O Freddy, don't," as Freddy grasped his mother's hat-brim with both hands. "Ticket offis wa'nt open then, or he'd 'a' got my ticket. Goin' North?"

"Yes," answered Dell, holding out her hands to Freddy, who began to survey her hat with delight.

"I'm goin' to Philadelphia—Camden. Jersey's my native State. Freddy, do you want to go? I'm afraid he'll tear you to pieces. He's an awful strong, boisterous child. O Georgy, don't swing that satchel so; you'll break the handle."

Freddy made a lurch, and Dell caught him laughingly. There was a sudden grave inquiring glance in his mischievous eyes.

"I ain't been smart sence he was born, last March. My man, he came down here three year ago and bought a farm. But I don't like it. It's so far away from everything. We had such a nice, snug little place just back of Camden, 'n all my folks live 'bout there. I ain't been home sence. And my man said I might as well go and recruit a littlé, I was so weakly and dropped down. He

said I was homesick, and I guess I be." She gave a wan smile and brought her purse to light. Then she studied Dell inquiringly.

"Do you get a through ticket?" inquired Dell.

"No, only to Washington."

Dell settled Freddy half under one arm, and felt for her money.

"How handy you be with babies. Guess you're used to them. Never mind—wait till I come back," making a gesture with her hand.

"Yes, we had a houseful," said Dell, saving her hat from wreck.

The woman came back with the two tickets.

"I could tell by your face you liked babies," she said, with a pleasant little cadence. "Is your pa's home North or here?"

"Oh, at New York."

"Been visiting here?"

"Yes," answered Dell.

"And I'll lay a penny you're homesick too! Were you away from all your folks?"

"Yes," replied Dell. "And I was awfully homesick."

The woman smiled sympathetically up in the bright honest face as she was settling herself. Certainly if Dell never looked pretty before, she looked so now to this pale, worn-out little woman, who took her baby back while Dell made her change correctly.

"Ah, you'll be glad enough to get back. I almost wonder your folks dared let you start alone."

"There was no one to come," said Dell cautiously.

"Where did your relations live?"

"I started from Croziers." Dell felt rather on guard.

"Croziers? I don't believe I know where that is. I've not been about much. Mamie was only a baby when we came, and I've been considerable busy," with a faint smile. "I've got two more at home. Jenny,

she's fourteen, and Jack is 'most twelve. Then I lost one between. I've had such a good, faithful black creetur all summer, used to be a slave ; and my man said they could get along, and I must go and get well and strong."

The train came in. Mamie had finished her cake, and Dell took charge of her. They were all marshalled out and marshalled in, and a seat was turned over to make them more comfortable.

"Now I will take Freddy again and rest you," said Dell, reaching out her hands.

"Oh, how good you be ! No one ever cuddles babies that way if they don't love them. How many are there at your house ?"

"Seven."

"And you the oldest?" she asked in surprise.

"I am not their child," returned Dell softly. "My own mother died at their house, and they adopted me. But I couldn't have had better parents."

"And you'll repay them. You have such a good face, and such lovely eyes. And what kindly people they must be."

"They are the best in all the world ;" and Dell felt as if she could fly to them on the wings of the wind.

"You're a grateful girl, and you'll prove a comfort to them. I'm so glad I've met you. Seems almost as if I had Jenny. And we'll get a sleeper together."

"I shall be glad to have you take me in charge," returned Dell, with smiling thankfulness. No one *could* suspect her now.

Mamie was settled in the corner, and soon fell asleep. Georgy clamored for some apples, and his mother opened the satchel, offering Dell one. The motion of the train had a soporific influence on Freddy, who ceased his frantic efforts and began to drowse.

"It's been a hard day for me," said Mrs. Blake.

"And I should ha' been 'most killed if I hadn't met you. You're so handy and kind."

It was such a rare delight to be praised, to have any one find personal sweetness in her. Her heart rose with a glad throb. And then she should see her dear Mamma Murray soon. She drew a long breath of relief that was a joyous thanksgiving as well. All doubts came to an end.

A rather gruff-looking man opposite surveyed the picture, studying the eyes that were like brown velvet, the smiling mouth, the rare art of entertaining. Of course she was the pale little woman's daughter. And he even considered, in the years to come, what a wife and mother she would make!

"You had better let me take Freddy," Mrs. Blake said. "He's so heavy."

"But I am stronger than you," Dell replied with cheerful decision.

Mrs. Blake propped herself up with a shawl and leaned her head back. "Would you mind if I took a five minutes' nap?" she besought. "The motion makes me so drowsy."

"Oh, do go to sleep a little while," cried Dell earnestly. "You look so tired."

Freddy was already in Slumbertown. It was such a delight to Dell to feel the plump, soft little form in her arms. She grew happier every moment. Oh, if she need never see Sherburne House again! She put it resolutely out of her mind. She would not even rejoice in their dismay.

The soft darkness began to fall without, but they all seemed so safe and comfortable. Dell came to a knowledge that she was woefully hungry. She hailed a fruit vender with delight, and yet she was helpless.

The man opposite saw her dilemma with an amused smile. Summoning the boy to him he purchased lib-

erally, took a newspaper from his pocket and improvised a sort of tray which he bade the boy take across to her.

She blushed, but smiled over to him with a rare admission of honest thanks. She ate with infinite relish, for the fruit was delicious. What a picnic it all was! As they plunged on through the darkness, Dell's heart was as light and sunny as a summer morning.

They stopped at a station. The man rose, and steadying himself in the aisle, dropped a magnificent bunch of grapes in Dell's hand that caressed the sleeping baby.

"You're a good da'ter," he said, with a kindly smile; then he stepped out in the darkness.

It seemed so natural to have people pleased and satisfied with her. Wasn't Sherburne House all a horrid dream!

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE OLD HOME ONCE MORE.

MRS. BLAKE stirred and opened her eyes.

"Oh, what a splendid nap I've had," she exclaimed. "And you've held that great heavy baby. How good you are! Give him to me now, I feel so nice and rested. And oh, my dear, I've a lot of good chicken sandwiches in the satchel. Why didn't you get 'em out, Georgy?"

"We's all had somethin' better'n sand things," returned Georgy, with disdain. "Grapes 'n pears 'n peaches."

"Oh, you didn't buy 'em?"—regretfully, to Dell.

Dell explained. Freddy began to squirm around and cry. His mother took him after she had found the sandwiches, done up nicely in a napkin. She offered them to Dell, who thought at first she could not eat any more, but they tasted quite delicious. Miss Sherburne would have been shocked at such voracity.

The agent came along to inquire about sleeping-car berths. Mrs. Blake took in Dell with her family. Presently the train slowed up in the great capital. Georgy shouldered the satchel manfully. Mamie was past rousing. When they stood her on her feet she fell down in a nerveless heap.

"If you will take the baby I'll manage her," said Mrs. Blake. Freddy had fallen asleep again. "And be careful of your money," she whispered. "My man he cautioned me. There's such lots of pickpockets."

All was pushing, confusion, hurrying to and fro. Mrs.

Blake carried Mamie in her arms, and Dell followed with the baby. Some one kindly piloted them, and at length they found themselves in safety once more. Mamie was laid in the berth, only giving a restless little grunt. Georgy, half asleep, was packed in beside her. Dell's berth was next to Mrs. Blake's. The poor child suddenly began to realize her utter fatigue, and was thankful to drop down anywhere.

It hardly seemed an hour when she was roused.

"My dear," said Mrs. Blake, "we're comin' into Philadelphia. I'm gettin' the children ready. But I wanted a sweet good-bye. It seems cruel to leave you. But you'll soon be in New York, and I hope you'll meet your friends all right. You've been such a help and comfort to me. I never did take quite so to a stranger. And I want you to send me a postal when you reach your ma, so's I shan't feel worried. Just direct to Mrs. Joseph Blake, Camden. And tell your ma, if you wasn't already adopted I should want to take you myself. Jenny'd love you so. My dear, will you kiss me good-bye?"

Dell raised herself up and clasped her arms about Mrs. Blake's neck. The little woman kissed her again and again. Georgy gave her a good-bye. The porter took Mamie in his arms, and Dell laid her head back on her pillow with tears in her eyes. She felt very lonesome now, whirling along in the greyness and tumult. She did not sleep any more, and could not help wondering what had occurred at Sherburne House. Would they really care if she had strayed off somewhere and died?

She reached her destination without any mishaps. It was quite daylight now. She was stiff and cold, and shivered as she followed the throng on the boat, with an apprehensive feeling that some one might pounce down upon her. But New York seemed secure ground. There was only the horse-car ride, and then —

Dell had an emotion that was not quite jubilant. What would papa Murray say? Had she really kept her promise about trying? Yes, she *had* tried. She would be sent back, of course. Could anything be done with her like sending her to a reform school? Oh, surely the Murrays would not allow that! Somehow the brightness of the escapade was a little dulled.

She signaled the conductor at the well-remembered corner. She walked two blocks—ah, how natural it all appeared. A great joy thrilled her, and her feet hardly touched the sidewalk. She flew in at the gate, over the porch—how small it looked to her now! opened the door, and went straight to Mrs. Murray's arms.

"Sure," cried Mrs. Murray, "sure now, you're no ghost nor banshee! Oh, where did you come from? Did you drop out of the clouds? O Dell, is it you for certain, flesh and blood? I never thought they'd let you come!"

When Mrs. Murray was excited, there came the prettiest and tenderest suggestion of brogue in her voice. She kissed Dell again and again, then both began to cry after the fashion of feminine nature. The children huddled round, clamoring, pushing each other, and almost rending Dell in pieces to snatch a hand or press a kiss somewhere on her soft, wet face.

"And it never *is* you!"

"Stick a pin in her," said Con, reaching for a great shawl pin on the cushion. Then they all laughed, and stared harder than ever.

The remnant of breakfast was still on the table, and Dell felt that she needed some. So she struggled with the tribe, managed to get off her hat and sack, and gave a big shiver as she stood before the stove.

"I'm hungry and cold all through. May I have some coffee?"

"My darling, yes. Tessy, get a clean plate. Oh,

children," with an amusingly helpless sound in her voice, "don't eat up Dell."

"I feel thin now," said Dell laughingly. "I wouldn't be good picking." They all brought her chairs, plates, knives, and forks, as if she was to eat twenty meals in succession. Mrs. Murray began to broil a bit of steak.

"Who came with you?" she asked. "And how did you ever persuade them? But you always were a coaxing colleen. And we've wanted so to know how you got on with your relative! She wrote a bitter note to Con because I let little Con send a line in answer to your letter. Ah, but she's a heart like a rock!"

"She's the hatefulest person—like the cruel people in books! She keeps me in my room, and sometimes I don't get enough to eat. And all of Sherburne House is mine!" cried Dell, with a burst of deep indignation. "I just ran away!"

Mrs. Murray dropped the plate she had taken, and it shivered to fragments. "Ran away!" she ejaculated. "Ran away!" cried the Greek chorus in every attitude, every gradation of tone, every variety of expression.

"O Dell! not—alone?"

"Yes, all alone." Dell had swallowed some hot coffee, and felt braver. "Of course they will come after me and take me back. I don't know what they will do to me. And she struck me, the horrid old thing!" Dell flushed with the remembered indignity. "I don't believe they dare beat me or put me in prison. But I should have gone crazy if I had not done something!"

"Hurray!" cried Con. "You're a lad after my own heart. Will you look at the pluck of her! I'll bet on you every time, Dell, and win."

"But"—Mamma Murray was so amazed she could only stare. "But—you couldn't walk——"

"I walked across the woods to a little station—Crozier's. And I did think I should never get there. Then I took

the cars to Junction, to Washington, to Jersey City, and came flying in this morning. A sweet, kind little woman with some children took care of me. It all seems now like a ridiculous dream ! But it is so utterly lovely to see you again."

"Dell, they will go crazy when they miss you," and Densie was terror-stricken at the thought.

Dell shrugged her shoulders and curled her lip. "Not they," she cried. "They do not care enough about me. They would all be glad to find me out in the woods, dead."

Lyndell honestly considered that the truth.

"But oh, if it was Tessy," moaned Mrs. Murray, in anguish.

"It wouldn't be Tessy nor Con, nor any one here. Oh, Mamma Murray, *no one* would ever want to run away from you. You are the dearest and sweetest and best woman in all the land ! Maybe God put so much sweetness in you that there wasn't enough left to go round. I've been starved for a sight of you. My soul was empty and forlorn. I think if they had let me write, it wouldn't have been quite so bad."

"Oh, my dear, my dear !" Densie wiped away some tears, and kissed down in Morna's curly head.

"But, Dell, dear—it cost something. And the money ——"

"It wasn't *her* money. And, mamma, when I get to be a young lady, I shall be very, very rich. And you shall all come and live with me."

"That's fair in you, Dell. Glad to see you're not going back on your old friends," and Con executed some wonderful double shuffles around the room.

Dell ate and talked. She told them how she had climbed down the vine ; of the queer old black woman, and Mrs. Blake and the babies. It was more wonderful to them than a fairy story.

"Come, Con," said Mrs. Murray presently; "see how the morning is going. And there's the yard to tidy, the cellar to clean, and the errands. And, Tessy, your sweeping."

"I'll help," cried Dell eagerly. "It'll be rare fun, just like old times. Oh, I wish the fortune hadn't come, and I was just Dell Murray again. It's so delightful to be here."

"No, you look tired, and you must just sit still. And you're not so rosy"—studying her. "And oh, you are thinner——"

Dell laughed gayly. "My stoutness is a terrible crime in Miss Sherburne's eyes, and she would rejoice to hear that. The Beaumanoir girls are slim and—yes, really pretty. Then there are a lot of cousins I have not seen; some of them are abroad, but I believe I am the only black sheep."

Tessy had piled up the dishes. Mrs. Murray began to wash them. Dell kissed the younger ones rapturously—Laddie was still asleep upstairs.

She made a snatch at the towel. "I'll dry the dishes," she declared. "It will be queer to do something really useful once more. Down there, there are servants and servants, a regiment of black people, and almost a village—called the quarters. And Cassy, Miss Sherburne's maid, never sweeps, and her hands are soft as a lady's. I am washed and dressed and have my boots buttoned and my hair combed, and I never even dust my room."

"O Dell, you're a real lady," cried Tessy admiringly.

"And I study French and music and Latin, but see—I can wipe dishes," and she held up a polished saucer. "Get me an apron, Tess, I did not bring my trunk. And somehow, Mamma Murray, I do not believe I was meant for a great lady. I like work and folks and everyday life. But if you could see the place! There's miles

and miles of woods and farms and tobacco fields, and such a great house ! Why you could put all of this dear old home in the parlor."

Con was so enchanted that he really could not stir. All the children listened big-eyed, and the smaller ones opened-mouthed. It was so hard to go away and leave their dear Dell. Who could be certain she would not vanish ? Poor Densie Murray was almost distraught with contending emotions. She trembled for the results of the escapade that Dell treated so airily.

When the dishes were done Dell ran out of doors with Con. The sun was shining brightly, and all the air had grown warmer. How gay the garden looked, but oh, how queer and small everything seemed ! Con began to take care of some vegetables and pile up a heap of rubbish. Ah, how light and happy she felt. Tim McCray spied her out, and in ten minutes the neighborhood was whooped up, and the clans gathering from "near and from far."

"You're changed curiously," said Con. "You're not a bit stuck up, but you've a 'moighty foinè air' about you. You're just the biggest sort of a tramp——"

"Sure you don't mean tramp ?" interrupted Dell with dancing eyes.

"Not to turn up your nose at a fellow who has to carry in a peck of onions and pick the sere and faded bean-vines. Let's shake pinkies and swear eternal friendship. And when I get there I shall do my best to beat you out of your boots in Latin."

They interlocked their little fingers and nodded. Then Dell had to entertain the crowd for a few moments. Oh, how many old friends there were ! What would Miss Sherburne say to see her the centre of this crowd of boys not over clean, not over whole as to garments !

Then Tessy came to summon them in.

"It's a telegram. Whatever will I do, Con?" cried his mother in dismay.

"And the man wants you to sign the book," urged Tessy. "Is there an answer?"

"Open it," commanded Con, with an assumption of manliness. Mrs. Murray did, but she was so agitated that she held it to Con to read.

If Lyndell Sherburne comes to you will you please notify immediately.

J. WHITTINGHAM.

Densie glanced around helplessly. Dell turned pale. "Of course I knew I would have to go back," Dell began tremulously. "Some one will have to come for me, and I can't go before Monday. Oh, let me send the answer." And her eyes sparkled.

"Yes," cried Con. "That will be immense."

Dell considered. Then she just penned :

I am safe with Murrays.

LYNDELL SHERBURNE.

The lad took the message and vanished.

"Miss Sherburne would like to explode me with dynamite," said Dell, with a saucy laugh. "Well, we won't let such a trifle spoil our good times."

And they did not. The "time" in Murray's Row far exceeded anything that had ever been known there. It was interrupted by dinner, and Dell declared she was "hungrier than a bear."

Afterward mamma insisted she must lie down on the lounge in the parlor. She looked so very pale and tired.

"Kiss me at least twenty times," besought Dell. "No one ever kisses me at Sherburne House."

"Alanna," began mamma coaxingly, "tell me a bit about the money. I can't feel easy in my mind. Was

it truly yours? Yet I'd as soon suspect this right hand,' and she held it up, plump and dimpled for all its hard work, "as to think——"

"Oh, mamma!" Dell flushed and the tears came into her eyes. "Mr. Whittingham gave me five dollars. And I had my own two dollars that I took with me. The other I found—so queerly that it was like the old black woman's miracle."

"Found it?" echoed Mamma Murray in consternation.

Dell sat up again and told the story. "I waited and waited, and no one asked about it. And I was afraid Miss Sherburne would not try to find the owner. She says she never believes the negroes. I know the money isn't mine, and I have only borrowed it. When I find the real owner, I shall get some of mine and pay it back."

Dell's honesty and casuistry puzzled the simple soul.

"Couldn't you have asked some one? Cassy?"

"Cassy must have told Miss Sherburne. And she might have said—maybe she would have thought I didn't really find it. You can't think how utterly alone I am. Oh, mamma, I shall hate to go back."

Dell sobbed, and Densie comforted her in her soft crooning voice, and smoothed the white forehead until suddenly, wearied out, Dell fell asleep.

The rest was an excellent thing for her. The day turned out very warm, so warm, indeed, that when she woke and had been bathed and refreshed, they all went out under the old apple-tree. Surely the neighborhood had assembled. There was Granny McCray, looking more than ever like a wrinkled-up winter apple, who had to clasp her arm before she would believe the girl wasn't a "shperit." And as Dell talked, she kept interpolating: "Will ye hear that now! Just listen a bit! Oh now, is it so, me dear!"

When Con Murray returned to the bosom of his family, his amazement knew no bounds. I am afraid he so admired the daring of the girl that he had less blame for the wrong. Dell was so eager, so fond, so inexplicably changed, and yet so true. And as she told her story bit by bit, not exaggerating in any respect, their hearts ached for her. They felt sore at Miss Sherburne's disdain of them, and her trying to win the girl to ingratitude.

"They ought to send you away to a nice school. With all the fortune that's to come to you, it's wicked to keep you mewed up like a prisoner. The cantankerous old thing! If she comes here again, she'll have a piece of my mind in short order."

"It's queer," remarked Dell, "but the other children like her and she is kind and caressing to them. It's just because I had to come in and take Sherburne House from them. And I didn't want it a bit at first, but now I am glad to keep it away from that Leonard Beaumanoir. I hate him!"

"Ah, dear, there are better things to life than hate," and Con kissed the child's flushed face. "It's going to be very hard for you. Heaven knows, I wish I could see some better way out of it. I don't want you to grow bitter and malevolent. For when you are a woman you can make many people happy, if you only keep your own sweet, sunny temper."

Dell drew a quivering breath.

"I can't keep sunny and pleasant," she said. "You don't know lonely, how shut in it all is for me. I get cross and tired sitting still so much, and I ache everywhere until I break out into some sort of temper. I never did it here."

"Dell, my darling, there is only one thing. Be brave and true. The time goes on, and it will presently bring you to womanhood; perhaps before that, you may come

to some liberty. And though it seems ungracious to find fault when you have braved so much to come to us, I want you to be very sure to search for the owner of the money you found. It was not yours. I am going to replace it, and I want you to keep it sacredly."

"Oh, papa Murray!" She kissed him with eager tenderness. "You must not do it. I mean to ask Mr. Whittingham for it. You see it ought to come out of *my* money."

"And, dear—in the time to come you will remember there is nothing equal to perfect uprightness."

The tears sprang to Dell's eyes, yet somehow she could not feel sorry she had ventured.

It seemed so good to sleep in the small room with Tessy. She held the plump, warm hand in hers, and listened to the child's soft, regular breathing. She did not feel sleepy. The contrast filled her mind, stirred, and excited her. Would she really want to come back and lose the splendid opportunities of the future? What if there were some mistake—what if she really were not Edward Sherburne's daughter? But then, she could remember her mother so far back; it seemed too, as if she could recall her father, in a shadowy way. But would she be glad to give up that fine old home, the grand woods and farms, the beautiful roomy house with its grandeur—even the maid to wait upon one, the spacious chamber, the rich antique furniture, that certain air of luxury that filled her for the first time with a vague sense of enjoyment? Hitherto it seemed as if she could have thrown it all to the winds in her eagerness to be back with the Murrays.

She could not really understand herself. She should never, never give up her old friends who had been so good to her in her time of need. But were not their ways diverging a little? Their futures would certainly be different. Not six months ago her girlish ambition

was to graduate with honors and to teach school. The richest girl in the county, Leonard Beaumanoir had said. She could no longer protest against the change, but she did rebel with her whole soul against the tyranny to which she was being subjected. If they would only send her to school!

Con Murray was rather wakeful as well.

"That woman will ruin the child," he said to Densie, with a keen sense of indignation. "If she is disobedient and insolent, the treatment has made her so. I'm sure one could always lead her with a soft word, and it argues ill for a nature that always wants to drive. There's something arbitrary and desperately selfish in it. And to think—if she'd found a dime about here, she would have run to you with it, and now she keeps this sum—she hasn't trust enough in any one to ask help to find the owner. One wants to laugh, too, at the real pluck of the colleen; and the love she bears us touches me to the heart's core. Why can't her relatives win a little of it? She only wants a kind word. She's not vicious or weak, she has some of the bravest virtues, though she's a bit hot-tempered. And with all this fortune she ought to grow up into a fine, noble woman. She would, with any sort of training."

"Whatever would we do if she had resolved not to go back!" cried Densie. "I was so frightened at first."

"She has some wisdom of her own," returned Con. "And she is beginning to understand her position. But I can't bear to think of the true, brave-hearted, honest child being made underhand, secretive, obstinate, and full of hate. If there was only one among them who would love her a little! It's a hard place to be thrust into by a curious turn of fate."

"If we had known for certain that her mother's hopes were to come true——"

"Yes, we should have done somewhat differently. I

ought to have written to them. Yet if it had added four years of hardship to a younger life! I suppose it is all just as the good Father meant it to be, and we must not lose faith because we cannot see the end. Only I don't want her to be ruined by the mistakes of others."

They all had a delightful Sunday. It was warm and summerlike. They sat out under the old apple-tree in the afternoon, and the neighbors visited. Dell enjoyed it with a secret sense of amusement. What would Miss Sherburne say to her being the heroine of such a very mixed audience? She became aware of an intangible difference herself. It was not pride—she kissed some of these old women with a tender heartiness, but she seemed to realize that she had come of a rather different race. Her mother was a more vivid personality than she had ever been before, and Dell felt as if, in some respects, she had suddenly matured. She was no longer a child, eager only for fun and love.

And though she enjoyed the quaint deference of the children, and was a wonder to the elders, she began to have a misgiving that it was not as truly heroic as it seemed to these simple people. Something in Con's eyes touched her as no reproof could have done. For love's sake he could hardly blame, yet neither could he approve. He was not less tender, in fact he could hardly let her go far from his caressing hand, but the very touch came almost to have an upbraiding in it. Still she, with the light-hearted impulse of childhood, put off the hour of reckoning. That she had caused any real alarm or anxiety at Sherburne did not seem possible to her. How had it been?

CHAPTER XIII.

A GRAVE QUESTION.

WHEN Cassy went to her dinner she had taken the precaution to lock Miss Sherburne's door. For once she had seen a fleet figure skimming up the stairs, though she had not considered it necessary to mention her suspicions. It was some time before she returned, as a little business delayed her.

How very still Lyndell seemed! Cassy had been forbidden to speak to her, so she softly took out the key and glanced into the apartment through the aperture. Dell's blue gingham was on the bed where she had thrown it in her haste. What more natural than for Cassy to fancy she had fallen asleep, wearied out with her solitude.

About five Miss Sherburne returned home, leaving her friends to complete their visit. Cassy sat sewing, and she glanced up at the entrance of her mistress.

"Have you had much trouble?" she asked.

"None at all. She has been very quiet. I fancy she must have fallen asleep."

"You remained here all the time?"

"Except when I went to dinner. Then Mrs. Wismer came, and I hunted up the package of clothing. Her husband is barely alive."

"You may go now." Miss Sherburne felt that she would rather fight her battle without witnesses.

All through her homeward drive she had been resolving resources in her mind, only to find them lamentably deficient. Certainly, authority was not respected as it

had been in her youth. She remembered her own stately and imperious mother, whose dainty hand often wielded a slim, silver-handled riding whip on a refractory slave or a disobedient child. Almost she longed to have the power restored. And yet she was not a cruel woman. The freed people at Sherburne found her an exact but not unkindly mistress.

She opened the door a slight space.

"Lyndell," she said, "you may bring me your books, and your sewing."

There was not the slightest stir.

"Lyndell," sharply. "Come at once."

The contumacy was exasperating. She pushed the door open. Lyndell was lying on the bed. This was too much to be borne quietly. She crossed the apartment. It was merely the child's dress. She searched the closet, she tried the door to the hall, which was locked. There was the open window.

She rang for Cassy.

"Where is Miss Lyndell?" she demanded.

Cassy searched the room to no purpose.

"She has escaped from the window."

"But I must have seen her. I sat here all the time, except at noon."

"You are quite *sure* you did not see her?" This was asked with biting contempt.

"I thought—she was so quiet that I looked once through the keyhole. I fancied she was asleep."

"Go and find her at once."

Miss Sherburne was too angry for further utterance. That Lyndell should dare to circumvent her in this manner! Certainly the child seemed possessed by the devil. What wanton blood was in her veins! That she dared to defy her authority so flagrantly, stunned the mistress of Sherburne House.

Cassy flew to the quarters. No one had seen her.

Then she ran to several of Dell's favorite nooks, but all in vain. Her eager, anxious voice woke only echoes.

Silver, the great house dog came up to her with eyes of mute inquiry.

"Silver," she cried, "where is Miss Dell?"

Dell had taken such a fancy to the dog on her arrival that Miss Sherburne, who really disliked dogs around, had banished him to the rear of the house.

He waved his tail with an air of profound sagacity, and began to scent the porch, the steps, the path. Then he went slowly across the turf to the magnolia thicket, where he paused with a puzzled expression.

"But she is not here, Silver."

Silver looked up out of melancholy eyes.

"Julius might take out the hounds," thought Cassy. "They would soon unearth her, if she was hiding anywhere. Or she might have lost her way." Full of this idea, she went to Miss Sherburne.

"No," said that lady austere. "I will not have the whole plantation roused. Let her come back of her own accord. She will hardly stay out all night."

But when she had partaken of her solitary supper, her haughty composure yielded a little to Cassy's suggestion that Dell might be lost. She really deserved to be left in the woods all night, but that would hardly answer. So she summoned Julius and his young compeer Tony.

"Miss Lyndell has strayed off somewhere alone," she explained. "You had better take out the hounds. Of course, I need not caution you to be careful and not frighten the child."

"We'll take the best o' keer," declared Tony.

Two splendid animals they were in leash, gentle enough to their master's hand. They, too, started for the magnolia glen, scented a little, than ran on intelligently.

Julius paused. "You better go back, Cassy," he said.

"Tone an' me'll find her shuah. It's gittin' dark an' damp."

Cassy returned, nervous and troubled. Dell must have gone at noon. It was plain that she had lost herself in the woods.

"If Missus wasn't so strict with her." In moments of excitement Cassy lapsed to the common idiom, though it was her pride to talk just like white folks. "If Missus wasn't so strict with her, it would be easier getting along. She was just lovely the week Missus was away. And I don't see why she doesn't pack her off to school. She'd fare enough sight better."

"They have gone over through the woods. She and Miss Hendricks took a walk there one day," announced Cassy.

"That child ought to be kept under bolts and bars," responded Miss Sherburne tartly.

Cassy wandered around with Silver at her side, pitying Dell from the bottom of her soul, and wondering what would be done with her. Miss Sherburne sat stiff and indignant, nursing her wrath.

Ten. Eleven. Some time after this there was a rush and rustle and the sound of voices. Miss Sherburne braced herself for the encounter.

"It's sutn'y de queerest t'ing," began Tony breathlessly. "Dem dogs went straight over to Croz'ers. An' to de depot! But sho! she hadn't been dar. We done woke up de clerk an' he swear no little gal buy any ticket dis yer arternoon."

Julius came up and corroborated the statement. "An' de dogs ready to go right back, but dey don' find no odder trail nowhere."

"Cassy, do you know whether Miss Lyndell had any money?"

"I'm sure she didn't. At least I never heard her mention only a little change she brought with her."

Of course Miss Hendricks would not be so generous as to present the child with the price of a ticket. Could she have written to the Murrays under cover of any one? She had watched her so closely, but there was that unfortunate week! She would never take her eyes off of Dell again until she was a woman grown.

Miss Sherburne was very, very angry.

"I do not know what else we can do to-night, if the dogs will not take any other direction. As soon as daylight, Julius, you go over to Ardmore and bring Mr. Whittingham back. Stay—perhaps it would be as well to take the lanterns and follow the creek."

"Yes'm."

Miss Sherburne went up to her room, put on a dressing gown, and lay down on the outside of her bed. She was very wretched and nervous. She hated to admit that the thing or person lived that she could not govern or reduce to some sort of submission. She had signally failed. Oh, what a terrible affair it had been from its very inception, Edward's meeting with that intriguing governess. It did not occur to her that they were the ones who had held the whole power in their hands, and could have forgiven these imprudent young people with less real anguish than Edward's death had cost them.

Some of the servants did not go to bed. Even at the quarters there was intense excitement. But Julius came back with no news of the truant.

"Shouldn't be s'prised ef she done gone took de keers somewer. Dem dogs nebber make mistakes."

At last morning dawned. It was still early when Julius brought Mr. Whittingham over.

"My dear madam!" He took Miss Sherburne's cold hand in his, and was moved to sincerest pity by her pale and harassed face. "What a terrible fright for you! And if there has been an accident—but I have quite

decided that she must have started for New York. Has she been in communication with the Murrays?"

"I cannot tell what she has done clandestinely. Not to my knowledge, however." And she tried to steady her voice.

"Had she any money?"

"A dollar or two, Cassy thinks."

Mr. Whittingham colored delicately. "I ought to confess," he began, in a somewhat embarrassed fashion, "that I gave her five dollars the last time I was here."

"How could you have been so short-sighted, so indiscreet?" Miss Sherburne cried impatiently.

"It was foolish, certainly." Mr. Whittingham flushed with mortification at the remembrance of having been cajoled out of it by a child's persuasion.

"It cannot be that she would dare defy us all and return to the Murrays!" Miss Sherburne's eyes fairly blazed with anger. "She must have had more money."

Mr. Whittingham stood silent from sheer amazement. That a girl of thirteen, knowing so little of the world, should undertake such a journey seemed incredible to him.

"I wish I had understood Julius a little more explicitly before I started," he said, with evident regret. "I should have telegraphed at once. But I imagined her lost in the woods, or having met with some accident, and I knew what your anxiety must be. If she went directly through, she will be there this morning."

"It is a great pity one could not allow her to remain there," the lady commented severely. "If this is a specimen of the way she is going on to make herself notorious, Sherburne House will be finely disgraced in the eyes of the world. The child is possessed by an evil spirit. You cannot trust her."

Mr. Whittingham essayed to soften the matter a little. And he was really worried.

"I had better get back to town as soon as possible and telegraph. Meanwhile, you will continue your search?"

"Such people bear charmed lives," she said, with intense bitterness. "They go through all dangers unharmed. Indeed I cannot bring myself to believe that she has been in any danger. I can almost hear her laughing at my fears in her impertinent way."

Mr. Whittingham drank a cup of coffee and mounted his horse again. Miss Sherburne went about her morning's duties. There was only one way she could solve the mystery, and presently she settled to that with a certain bitter satisfaction. She rarely left any money lying about not under lock and key. But she remembered some few times slipping a small sum in the corner of her dressing-case drawer, or in the desk downstairs. That it would be rather an impossibility for Dell to leave the schoolroom and go roaming around undetected did not occur to her. She did not shrink with any sense of horror at considering the child a thief—it was what one might look for, that or any other disgrace.

The result of the telegram established Mr. Whittingham's half-suspicion and relieved him immensely. He sent word out to Sherburne House, also that he would proceed to New York that very evening, hoping in his inmost soul that Miss Sherburne would not propose to accompany him. Indeed she had no desire. Nothing would induce her to meet the Murrays again.

Mr. Whittingham presented himself at an early hour Monday morning, desirous of finding Mr. Murray, and in this he was successful.

"We were so relieved to learn that you had the truant safe," said the visitor, when the first greetings had passed. "I hope you were not advised beforehand of her escapade, and in no way abetted it?"

"You should know us better and judge us more fairly,

Mr. Whittingham," was the grave answer. "We were utterly surprised."

"I feel that you must be. It was a terrible fright, for no one supposed the child had enough money to set out on such a journey. It was a great mystery how she obtained it."

"I think she can explain that to your satisfaction. When you place no confidence in a child, when you deliberately show her that you will not depend upon her word, you are not likely to beget confidence. You'll find in a little while that the child can outwit you."

"I will admit frankly that I do not altogether approve of my friend's methods," rejoined Mr. Whittingham. "You see an entirely new element has been introduced, and Miss Sherburne hardly knows how to deal with it. Changes in character must be made slowly, and violent opposition always rouses the like quality, or is fruitful of deceit."

Mr. Murray flushed warmly. "I have not discovered any deterioration in regard to the child's truthfulness," he replied quickly. "She is as frank and open as ever, but her fine sense of honor *will* be ruined under the treatment to which it is subjected. Miss Sherburne struck at one of the highest virtues in the human soul when she tried to uproot the child's grateful remembrance of us. I told you both you couldn't do it. Nothing will ever destroy Lyndell Sherburne's loving regard for us. Indeed, nothing ought. Why, look you—was it so small a thing to care for her mother, to give *her* shelter and a parent's care these four years? It would be monstrous ingratitude to forget. And her mother was the most grateful creature in the world. You never raised a finger for her that she didn't smile as graciously as the finest queen of them all. But to take a child away from everything that has been dear and pleasant

and sweet, and thrust her out to loneliness, is what I call cruel!"

"You cannot understand both sides," began Mr. Whittingham in nervous embarrassment.

"But I *can* understand truth and honor and kindness and sympathy, and they tend to make life better;" interrupted Con Murray, with indignant warmth. "I know the child wasn't wanted, but she had the right. They pretend they loved the father; they punish her for the father's sin. There are people in the world who are always wanting to help deal out God's judgments. But they've nothing at all to do with them. And if this young man had let the sweet, pretty girl alone, to go her own way, there would have been no trouble. But having married her, I should have been ashamed of my whole race in him, if he had been less loyal, if he had done any less than try for her happiness. Now why can't these people of yours accept the facts? The child did not want to come to them. She has a good right to despise their pride and narrowness and ill-will that, perhaps, indirectly made her an orphan. She would have gone to them with kindest impulses if they had given her a welcoming smile, treated her with a show of justice——"

"I think—when time has worn off the asperities——"

"But there should be no asperities to wear off as far as the child is concerned. If she was vicious, if her associations had been at the lowest ebb of morality, there might be some excuse. I'm Irish, to be sure, and I'm not ashamed of it. I'm thinking that two hundred years ago there was more than one good Irishman came over to Virginia and the Carolinas. And though we've no title in our branch, there was many a brave soldier from the time of Boyne Water down, and they always stood up for honor and the broader liberty of conscience.

So I've ancestors in plenty. And as to poverty, my bit of land here—Murray's Row as we call it—could be turned into a fortune to-morrow. Miss Sherburne was a bit wild when she put us down to the bottom of things. Diamonds lie in the depths of sand pits, and pearls are fished up out of the blackest mud at times, but I never heard of a pretty woman refusing them for that cause." And Con's eyes twinkled.

"My dear sir, I beg of you not to take that too literally," the visitor pleaded.

"But when it's thrust at you, put in plain black and white, as if somewhere along life you had been down to the lowest depths! I saw it all when she bound me to have no communication, and I promised; but I said to myself, 'When Dell Sherburne's a woman and free, she'll come back to the bosom of her foster-mother as swift as a carrier dove,' and I was willing to wait. I don't think she was told at first that she was not to write, and I'm sorry she did it without asking permission. Then Con, that's my lad, found the soft spot in his mother's heart and begged to write just once, and she let him. There would have been no more letters. But the madame flies at me like some wild thing and accused me of all the crimes in the calendar! I took no notice. I never have words with a woman. And I truly believed that the end, for years to come. Do you not think we should long to hear about the child we loved as our very own?"

Mr. Whittingham changed color more than once through Con's fervent harangue. To try to reinstate Miss Sherburne in the opinion of the Murrays would be a useless endeavor. He could not make them understand the fine exclusive pride of birth that had been instilled into her from childhood, and intensified by her narrow life and many of the incidents of the war. Yet her extreme bitterness to the child was something quite

foreign to her nature. She had ruled the household and the slaves, and she had the old ideas of keeping people in their places by a certain austere repression. That Lyndell's position was that of the heiress of Sherburne House, and that she was to have respect shown to her as a real descendant of the young man so loved and regretted, had not yet forced its way into her unwilling soul. He was silent from very perplexity.

"I should be the last man," continued Mr. Murray, "to teach a child to hold in light esteem its natural guardians. And I understand how necessary it is for Lyndell to be won to her own people. We should have trained her to consider them more seriously, only we were afraid of putting into her head hopes that could never be realized. We never doubted that Mrs. Sherburne believed her child the heir to some fortune, but there are so many queer things in law, and at first we waited to hear. You see, I didn't know just where to write. It's been an unfortunate business, and now we ought all to do our best for the child."

"But do you think you can persuade her to return without a great deal of trouble?" and Mr. Whittingham's very eyes appealed to the foster-father.

"Return!" Con lifted his eyebrows, and his lip curled with a half contempt at any one understanding Dell so poorly. "She hasn't a thought of staying." He laughed softly in pleased triumph. "God knows I wish we could keep her! But she knows her father's home is to be hers; and while she frets against it, she understands that her relatives have the legal rights, and that we may not at present make even the claim of friendship. We shall not do it. We can wait."

Mr. Whittingham was greatly relieved. If Dell would only be reasonable!

"I hope you will see the justice of standing between her and any bitter displeasure she may have incurred.

It was a daring thing—undertaken on the spur of the moment, but the plan had been in her mind some time. If you want a kind, gracious, generous-hearted woman, her character must be shaped that way by example," said Mr. Murray.

Mr. Whittingham held out his hand.

"Believe me that I have *not* entirely approved of Miss Sherburne's course, though it was difficult to interfere. I shall take a more decided stand in the future. I want you to feel that you can trust me with the child so dear to you all. I shall insist upon her being sent to school."

"That would be better. It's cruel, keeping her in such bondage. It's like catching some bright wild creature and shutting it away from its kind. Punishing her with days of confinement and a bit of bread—why, I don't wonder she ran away!" And he smiled. "It's the outbreak of any child deprived of its natural liberty. But she's seen us all and she's had her fling, as we say, and she expects to face the result. She hasn't begged to stay. She has not suggested that any one shall stand between her and harm. She has the courage of a boy. I have more than once said she should have been a boy."

"That would have simplified matters greatly. There would have been little objection to her in that case."

"So you punish her again for being a girl!" said Con humorously. "That's rather hard, seeing it wasn't her fault. But some man will harvest a tremendous amount of sweetness if it doesn't all get crushed out of her, and she soured by the process."

"She shall have a fair chance in the future—I will see to that myself," said Mr. Whittingham, with a new decision in his tone. "She has *not* been rightly treated. And I cannot sufficiently express my admiration of you and yours for the honorable and kindly course you have

taken. I will say here that as often as once a month I will keep you informed of her welfare. I realize what a great sacrifice Miss Sherburne asked of you."

"Thank you," replied Con. "May be I'm a bit hot-headed, and I *was* indignant at the idea of a girl of thirteen being subjected to such rigorous treatment simply because she wasn't made on some other person's plan. I'll trust you to see she has some of her rights. I don't believe the Sherburnes have quite all. And in the days to come there may be some Murrays that won't shame even Miss Sherburne."

Mr. Whittingham would have been very exigent if he had not admired Con Murray. There was the largeness of a nature's nobleman about him. And though in *his* narrow circle self-made men rarely knocked for entrance, he acknowledged, this one would hardly be refused admittance where manliness was one of the requisites.

"May I see Miss Dell?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; we are not keeping her a prisoner." And he laughed genially, as he opened the door and summoned her.

Dell entered a little abashed. She raised her eyes with a half-shy, irresistible entreaty. Mr. Whittingham put out his hand, and she found hers taken in a kindly clasp. Already she was half-forgiven.

"I shall leave you to answer for your own sins," said papa Murray. "Only—must she leave us immediately?"

"No," returned her guardian. "I have a matter of business on hand, and we will not start until to-morrow morning."

"Then I will leave you for a conference," said Mr. Murray. "I will see you again to-morrow." And he bowed his adieu.

Dell stood bright-eyed, daring, yet silent.

"You gave us all a great fright," began Mr. Whittingham. "Julius turned out and scoured the woods, and Miss Sherburne did not sleep for the alarm."

Dell laughed a little, a doubtful, half-inquiring sort of laugh.

"Do you suppose any one would have cared if an accident had happened to me? That is, if I were dead? They would have Sherburne House then."

"My child, you must not think *any one* could be so utterly heartless," he said, with real solicitude. "No one desires your death. For, after all, the whole family knew that while you lived they had no claim. And you were brought to your rightful home."

"But I could see. I *can* see and feel. Does any one love me as they do here at the Murrays? No, that would be too much to ask. But, Mr. Whittingham, I have been shown so plainly that I was an interloper, that I was unwelcome, that I did not deserve to be treated with any consideration. And those who had befriended me were despised. Everything I did was wrong. Everything I had learned was of no account." Dell's bosom heaved and her eyes filled with tears.

"It has been very hard for you," he said gently. "I have only just realized how hard. But we shall institute a new order of things, and I want you to believe I am sufficiently interested in you to study your welfare. If you choose, you shall go away to school."

"I *do* choose. In school I should rank with other scholars. I know I could keep my place;" she ended proudly.

"How had you the courage to take such a journey alone?" he inquired with a half-smile, in spite of his gravity.

"Was it courage? I was wild, desperate! Mr. Whittingham, I once had half a mind to throw myself out of the window in the hope that it would kill me.

And then I thought they would have Sherburne House, and be really happy over it. And now I am resolved to live. But it was rather—perhaps I *am* very bad after all." And she sighed. "I do not call it real bravery—it was daring, a defiance of—of Miss Sherburne's power. She had been so very unjust to me all the week. I had planned it so many times when I was miserable and lonely, that it seemed as if I knew just the way."

"You walked over to Croziers?"

"Yes. And there was no difficulty anywhere. A very kindly woman took care of me. I do not think it was—quite fair or honest"—and Dell's head drooped while a scarlet flush mounted to the very roots of her hair—"to use the money you gave me—for that purpose—and in that way."

"But that was not all?"

"I found the rest. I know *that* was not mine either, and as soon as I get home I shall try to discover the owner." She had a vague wish that Mr. Whittingham might help her, but she felt that Cassy would be in a better position so to do.

"That is right," he replied. He was glad to find her so amenable. Then he told her she would have another day's respite, and she was delighted beyond measure.

What a day it was! A merry party went down to the Park and had a delightful sail, and no end of fun donkey riding. Then Aunt Maggie came to tea, and what with all the babies and all the entertainment, Dell was tired enough to drop asleep the instant her head touched the pillow.

And though she was brave the next morning, it was a hard parting, nevertheless. She realized now that it might be years before she would see them again, and she had sacredly promised papa Murray never again to seek them or hold any intercourse in opposition to Miss Sherburne's wishes.

Densie held her to her heart, and kissed down into the wet face with tremulous lips.

"Oh, my darling!" she cried, "trust the good Father, and he will bring it all out right. You'll always be our very own, and we want some day to be proud of our dear daughter."

Dell could only answer with sobs.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MEASURE OF COURAGE.

MR. WHITTINGHAM found during the first part of the journey as quiet a traveling companion as Dell had proved three months earlier. He covertly watched her eyes overflow and thought they looked like wind-blown lakes. How curious that the Murrays brought out only what was sweet and noble in her! They had no complaints to make. And yet he had seen children hanging about Miss Sherburne's neck, kissing her delicate cheek, almost smothering her in the carriage. Certainly she had never objected to them, and the house had been gay with grandchildren during Mr. Sherburne's declining years. Was it, indeed, the secret unwillingness to accept her that reacted upon the child?

Mr. Whittingham longed to say something that would bring Lyndell Sherburne into friendly relations with himself. But he had never known girls intimately. His sister had married and gone away while he was yet in college. He and his mother had lived together until her death, not many years before, when his sister, now a widow had come back to keep his house. One son was in Colorado, married; one she brought with her, a quiet, studious lad who was now reading law in his uncle's office. He was courteous and gentle to all womankind, but a girl was an unknown quantity to him.

Dell somehow felt curiously tired. She was going to her true place in the world, to fight a hard battle, and it seemed as if she had suddenly lost the vim of belliger-

ency. Had she outgrown the desires of the past? She felt merged into some state that was quite new ; she was not at home in it. Neither did she want the old life. There was an irritating mental struggle, a sense of having gone past the children in Murray's Row, and a certain presentiment of having bidden them good-bye forever.

She had not hitherto made her fortune any real thing. She saw now the changes it must bring out in many respects. It drifted her to quite another shore. It had duties of a different order from the life Dell Murray had known.

All the latter part of the journey a friend claimed Mr. Whittingham's attention. Dell felt very tired—and was glad when they could leave the train. They went to a hotel and had some dinner, but she was not hungry. She enjoyed the walk afterward, as he pointed out many places of interest. He found her an intelligent companion, abounding in bright comparisons. When the lamps were lighted, she was eager in her enjoyment. The night air was so cool and delightful that it eased her throbbing temples.

Still, she felt glad to go to bed. Perhaps this vague, stupid feeling was the reaction. She tossed restlessly, she slept by snatches, and woke with strange impressions that could hardly be called dreams. Was it because she dreaded the final termination of her stolen pleasure?

She looked rather heavy-eyed the next morning, and wanted nothing more substantial than peaches and melons. Mr. Whittingham was really distressed about her.

"I want you to look upon me in the light of a true friend," he said kindly to her. "And if you wish to make any appeal to me, do not be afraid so to do. Though I anticipate being forbidden to give you any more money for some time to come."

Dell gave a faint smile. "Perhaps I shall not want any," she said listlessly, "unless I go to school. And I shall always, I think, tell you just what I wish to do with it."

"I shall be pleased with the confidence. Do you want to tell me just how you found that money—you merely said you found it."

"I should like to." Dell slipped a little nearer to him, and considered. "Would you be compelled to tell Miss Sherburne?"

"Not if you desired it kept secret."

"And then she would be very angry. Perhaps I had better not," she said gravely. "I want to make one attempt to discover the owner, but not through her. And I am afraid she would not believe me if I told her the exact truth."

"You have never told her anything but the truth?" he inquired, in a little alarm.

"I have never told her any falsehoods." And Dell raised her serious eyes that somehow looked pathetic this morning. "I am afraid I have done things—papa Murray did not consider them quite right. At home, you know, mamma was not always cutting off pleasures and shutting you up alone for punishment. And if we had any doubt, we were not afraid to ask her. She liked to have us happy." And Dell sighed.

"I hope you are going to be happy again. You must try to make yourself as much loved at Sherburne——"

"There would need to be people to love me," she said archly, as he paused.

Then they took their morning journey and arrived at Ardmore in due time. The Sherburne carriage was there, driven by Julius, the mistress sitting in the utmost state. She leaned out a little and held her hand toward Mr. Whittingham.

"I knew your time would be valuable to you this morning," she said, "so I drove over. I could not be quite sure that you would be a match for the Murrays, single-handed. Was the conflict very sharp? Of course the affair was of their planning? And I suspect Miss Hendricks had a hand in it."

"You quite misjudge them all," he returned gravely. "And I had no trouble whatever. They have shown the utmost consideration. I must have a long talk with you. Will this afternoon be agreeable to you?" And there was a slight imperativeness in his tone.

"Any time. And I have solved the mystery of the money," with a bitter smile, bending a little lower so that no one could hear. "It is simply shameful, monstrous!"

Julius had assisted Dell into the carriage, and taken his own seat. Now his mistress gave him a signal.

"Do not be hasty or unjust, I beg of you," entreated Mr. Whittingham as they drove away.

She had vouchsafed one cold nod to Dell. Now she took no notice whatever of her. Dell sat silent, her head was aching, and there was a queer feeling as if her soul had wandered off into vague space, and only a dull, nerveless body was left here to fight the battle.

It was a soft, sunless day, with perhaps a touch of coming storm in the air. How lovely and inviting everything looked. If the trees would only take her in their fragrant arms! No one would hold her or caress her again for such a long, long time. They turned the curve in the avenue. Was that the window out of which she had stepped only a few days ago, full of eager, defiant resolves? How long it seemed!

They were handed out. A few faces were peering curiously. Miss Sherburne merely said—"Go upstairs."

Dell went indifferently. Nothing seemed to matter much. Cassy sat sewing in Miss Sherburne's room. She sprang up with a cry that had a throb of relief in it.

"Oh, Miss Dell! And you have really returned! I was afraid—— And how could you dare venture on such a journey! We were frightened almost out of our wits! And you might have been murdered——"

Dell laughed, with careless scorn. "I am nearer being murdered now," she said.

"Oh, Miss Dell—I wouldn't stand in your shoes for a world! Did your friends send you the money?"

There was an eager, strained look in Cassy's eyes.

"My friends? No. They are innocent of any part in the matter. No one counselled me or assisted me in the slightest."

"But how *did* you get the money? Oh, Miss Dell, you surely never took what did not belong to you!" and there was a wild sort of terror in Cassy's voice.

"If you mean that I stole the money," and Dell's eyes were black with rising temper, "I do not know who I could steal it from——"

"I can attend to this matter, Cassy," said Miss Sherburne, with austere dignity. Her first impulse was to dismiss Cassy, then she turned to Dell, who still stood there with her hat on. The flame of passion had died down, and there was a curious ashen pallor.

"Yes, Miss Lyndell Sherburne, I demand to know how you obtained the money you used for your journey?"

Dell was dully silent. She feared that her story had an air of improbability. If Miss Sherburne did not believe her—and there seemed small encouragement in the stern, icy face.

Miss Sherburne had brooded over her idea so continually; she had been offended, too, that Dell was allowed an extra day. A stern reckoning it was now to be.

"You will not tell, you shameless, despicable girl! How dare you disgrace an honorable family by such lawless, defiant proceedings! You have ruined yourself for life. You deserve to be placed in some penal institution. Confess, wretched girl, who your accomplices were, that they too may be punished. The arm of justice can reach a long distance, you will find."

"I had no accomplices," Dell returned sullenly. "I went while Cassy was at dinner. No one saw me. No one helped me."

"And the money?" Miss Sherburne's eyes were fastened on her with a triumphant glitter that seemed to transfix the child.

"I would rather not tell you just now," Dell answered, in a curiously measured tone.

"You cannot!" with a bitter emphasis. "You shrink from blazoning your shame, your pitiful dishonesty. Well—I will tell you. Little by little, as you found drawers and boxes open, you abstracted that money! I had not lived with thieves, so I took no extra precautions. Like the sly, stealthy creature that you are, you planned and made all ready, and watched your opportunity. You salved your conscience with the thought that, since you were the future heiress of Sherburne House, you had a right to anything you could lay your hands on. But you will find that you had *no* claim on my money. And you will carry this brand of a thief all your life long! I wonder you do not sink to the floor at my very feet, at thus seeing your humiliating perfidy unearthed. You have no shame, no sense of honor. The kind of creature your mother must have been, I can faintly imagine!"

Dell had stood horror-stricken. If Miss Sherburne had missed money, nothing but the real ownership of her fifteen dollars ever could exonerate her. And Miss Sherburne would take no steps toward that end, since she claimed the money. Then her high courage came

to the front. She was deadly pale, and every pulse throbbed and trembled so that she could scarcely stand. Her eyes were balls of dark, lurid fire, and she fixed them steadily on her persecutor.

"You believe I stole your money?" Her voice was clear, and terrible in the lack of any expression of outward anger. "I took no money from this house on which you could have the slightest claim. When you call me a thief, you utter a falsehood that I shall never forgive to my latest hour. I shall always hate you! Do you not suppose that I know I am entitled to something beyond mere food and shelter, that you have no real right to keep me a prisoner, to half starve me, to accuse me of crimes of which I never even dreamed! You treat me as if I were a slave, an outcast forced upon your charity. There are no slaves now." And she laughed scornfully. "You hardly dare murder me, I think——"

The room seemed to whirl around and turn dark before Dell's eyes, and a horrible misgiving seized her. What if Miss Sherburne *had* lost the money!

The lady stood dumfounded for a moment. Never had she imagined such effrontery, such bravado. She had expected to overwhelm Lyndell by the knowledge of her turpitude, and she still stood there defying her. Conquer, she must.

"All this fanfaronade does not explain away your crime," she went on, with haughty, withering scorn. "You are an insolent, untruthful, dishonest girl. You are not to be trusted out of one's sight, and you never will be again. I had not counted on your being honorable enough to confess your fault, so your course does not really surprise me. But you will find that I am not to be trifled with. There will be no moment in the future in which you will not be under my own, or Cassy's eyes."

Dell's strength seemed suddenly waning. There was

a sound in her ears as if she had been plunged into the depths of the sea. A thief! That was what she had been called by the woman who had no right over her, who was living in her house and denying her the freedom of it. The very air rayed off sparks. Miss Sherburne seemed to assume gigantic proportions and sweep down upon her. She was sick, dizzy! She tried to scream but her throat was like ashes, her tongue stiff. Then all was dark.

Cassy sprang up. Dell had struck her head against the corner of the chair as she went down. She was marble white, her lips a compressed blue line.

"I don't know whether she has fainted or is shamming," said Miss Sherburne coldly. "She is such a perfect mistress of deception. Lay her on the bed. After such a tramp and this lawless indulgence I should think she would be tired out."

Cassy carried her to her own bed. She soon revived, but she glanced around in a dazed manner, then shut her eyes and drew a long, sighing breath.

"Give her a bath," Miss Sherburne commanded, with sharp authority. "Then you may as well put her to bed. I forbid you to say one word to her more than absolute necessity requires. She shall be watched as a cat watches a mouse. I will not have her running around like a ploughboy. She shall learn to conduct herself decently and not disgrace us all."

Cassy was left alone with the child. She began to disrobe her, but Dell paid no attention. In the bath she shuddered, and clung to Cassy with a pitiful cry. Then she was put in fresh garments.

"I should like to go to bed," she said weakly. All her energy had left her. She was so tired, she ached so all over. Oh, what *was* the matter?

"Will you get me a drink?" And she turned her dulled eyes to Cassy.

"Oh, Miss Dell, surely you are not going to be ill?" cried Cassy, with concern. "There, lie down."

"The water tastes bitter. Oh, you don't suppose any one would poison me?" she cried tremulously.

"There, dear, there," said the soft voice soothingly.

The next moment she had dropped asleep. How like death she looked! Cassy was frightened, and waited anxiously for Miss Sherburne's return.

"She looks ill," the girl said, in an apprehensive tone.

"I should think she would be, after racing around the country like a crazy thing," was the reply in a hard, pitiless tone. "Sleep will do her the most good."

Lyndell slept on and on. She scarcely stirred. Miss Sherburne attended to her duties, and severely discouraged any inquiry on the part of the servants. Mr. Whittingham came quite early in the afternoon. Truth to tell, he was ill at ease concerning his ward.

"Lyndell has gone to bed," Miss Sherburne said, in answer to his solicitude. "She was tired to death, and is asleep. What could one expect after such adventures?"

"Did you question her any?"

"I did. She replied in her usual insufferable, insolent manner. She really glories in her escapade. What is to be done with the child puzzles me!"

Her tone was hard to the verge of indifference.

"You said you had some suspicion? The Murrays seemed to think there was nothing very wrong—" and he hesitated, flushed a trifle.

"I suppose not." Miss Sherburne cut off her words sharply. "I told you I had solved the mystery. The child has watched her opportunities, and abstracted small sums as she has found my desk open. It would not surprise me if she had also taken some from Miss Hendricks."

Mr. Whittingham was horror-stricken.

"Surely, Miss Sherburne, you *must* be mistaken! I cannot credit such a thing! Had you missed any sums?"

Miss Sherburne colored, with a sort of inward upbraiding. She had not gone strictly over her accounts. Neither could she say that she had positively missed any money, or had any particular date for her losses. Yet she was certain it must be so, and was so angry at the girl's defiance that she would not try to unearth any proof to the contrary.

"I taxed her with it," she said, "and she could give no explanation. She showed every sign of guilt. Of course this is a delicate matter, and I shall not bruit it abroad. But in future I shall take great care that she has no opportunities."

"I have given the matter serious consideration," he began gravely. "She is a great tax on your time and patience, and she would be better with companions of her own age. I think I can convince Mr. Beaumanoir that she needs the regular discipline and incentives of school——"

"School!" the lady interrupted. "Companions! She would ruin every child with whom she came in contact. She would disgrace us all openly before she had finished her first term. I would not trust her out of my sight—I never shall again."

"Perhaps you are a little embittered," he returned, much distressed. "The Murrays found no fault with her. It has been hard, I admit, to take in an utter stranger, and it has been as trying for her among strangers. My dear madam, I beg of you to consider many points." Then he paused, perplexed as to how he could best present his case.

"You will grant that I have had considerable experience with children," she said loftily. "And this is certain—I will not risk any future disgrace. I have had

enough of wild pranks. For the present I shall keep the child entirely under my control."

"At least, you will allow me to see her?" he inquired courteously. If she came down he might persuade her to some explanation. He was very much afraid it would not be honorable; but it was best to have it over, to know the worst.

"Oh, if she cares to come"—indifferently. She rang the bell and summoned Cassy.

"Dress Miss Dell, and send her down," was the peremptory order.

"She is asleep," replied Cassy, then added hesitatingly: "She does not seem at all well."

"Shall I have her roused?" to Mr. Whittingham.

"Oh, no!" rubbing his hands rather nervously. Yet he regretted it extremely.

He did not remain much longer, for he saw that it was quite impossible to reason with his hostess, and he did not wish to quarrel.

"She seems very feverish," said Cassy, when Miss Sherburne entered the room.

"Of course it will take her some days to get over the excitement, but such rugged constitutions soon recuperate," returned the lady carelessly.

Dell lay there half asleep, unable to think consecutively. She tried to rouse and remember where she wished to go. What was this band around her head; this heat, as of some dreadful fire? Then all was dark and cool again. She was threading her way through the woods in mortal terror of dogs. Then she was lost in a crowd, stifled, crushed, gasping for breath —

With evening a soft rain set in. Miss Sherburne moved about uneasily. What was to be done with this contumacious girl to-morrow? What if this lawless adventure should bring about a scandal! She had heard of wild young women doing desperate things and ruining

their good names, eloping with some ignoble schemer. Such a girl would be only too ready to throw herself into the arms of any man who pretended to care for her. The future loomed black with horrible phantoms that made her shudder.

She went to her desk and commenced a note to Mrs. Beaumanoir, begging her to make the closest inquiries about Mrs. Fanshawe and learn whether she was a person of experience and authority. She could hardly decide whether to explain the escapade or not. Then she tried to go over her accounts. She kept them scrupulously, and she had a misgiving that she must have missed even a few dollars. But her head ached, her nerves were all unstrung, and she closed her desk with a kind of impatient weariness.

Cassy had given Dell a composing draught, and she was sleeping heavily. There was some fever, but it did not appear alarming. After much perplexed cogitation Miss Sherburne dismissed Cassy and retired, leaving the door open between the rooms.

She had drowsed off when something startled her. She sprang up in bed. Lyndell was cautiously stealing through the room, her hands outstretched.

"Lyndell, what do you mean?" Miss Sherburne caught her by the arm, shaking her roughly.

The girl turned and stared with glazed, desperate eyes. Her face was strangely swollen and flushed a dull scarlet, her lips livid.

"I am going away." And she gave a shrill laugh. "You want Sherburne House for—for some one—I can't remember. Papa Murray will tell me. And you shan't starve me. You have no right——"

"Go back to bed this moment!"

"Why, I am going to run away!" She laughed in a weak, confused fashion and put her hand to her head, still staring at Miss Sherburne.

Was she delirious, or was this merely acting?

"Yes—I have the money all safe. She shall not starve me! How far is it? I am so tired, and if I cannot reach Croziers before the train goes——"

She stood immovable. Miss Sherburne summoned Cassy.

"O Edward," she groaned. "If you could see the result of your wretched marriage!"

Cassy took Dell's arm gently.

"Will you get my ticket?" she inquired cautiously. "I had better not be seen."

"Yes, this way." Cassy led her back to bed.

"Oh," she shrieked, "don't let her come near me! Don't let her look at me with her cruel eyes! I hated them when I first saw them!"

Cassy waved Miss Sherburne away. She soothed and caressed her with gentle touches, and some time later Dell fell into a heavy sleep.

Miss Sherburne sat by the window and listened to the drip and patter of the leaves.

"I am silly to allow that child's unreasoning chatter to disturb me." She gave herself a sort of mental pulling together. "No one can be quite safe from her horrible tongue. The Murrays suggested it, no doubt." She shivered with an inward fear. Surely, she had not desired Dell's life—she could truthfully say she had never dreamed of her dying. That there were secret stabs and wounds given in the name of discipline, that there might be slow spiritual and mental starvation that sapped both body and mind she did not consider. She justified herself in her own course, she had even made it a matter of conscience. She had resolved to sacrifice her own ease and comfort—that did not look like wishing the child out of the way. If Dell had followed her mother, there would have been small lamentation, but now they were all bound to

make the best of it—if there was any best, she thought grimly.

How long it was before morning dawned! Dell alternated between restlessness and stupor. Before it was barely light Miss Sherburne roused Julius, and despatched him for the doctor. Surely Dell should receive all needful care.

The rain ceased, though the sky was full of low-lying clouds. A curious something pervaded the house. She would not entertain any dismal presentiments. Of course the child would get well. She was overtired, she had been tremendously excited, and run wild while in New York. She was strong and healthy.

While she was waiting for breakfast, Miss Sherburne completed her accounts with a sort of secret dismay. There was no discrepancy. No sum, small or large, was missing. Perhaps she might have forgotten to enter some amount. Where else *could* Dell have obtained the money? It was bitter, indeed, to think of a thief in an unstained old family; and it was equally mortifying to imagine that she should have guessed wrongly.

She did not realize how far she had allowed her prejudices to sway her. She would have been truly shocked had the scales fallen from her eyes. Her life had been severely upright. She had loved her own with undeniable tenderness. She would have made any sacrifice for them. And under certain conditions she could have been gracious to Lyndell.

Then a sudden scream roused her.

"Take me away," Dell cried frantically. "Take me to my own dear Mamma Murray!"

Dinah rushed upstairs, unbidden. Cassy was struggling with the poor girl, who had again leaped out of bed.

"Pore chile! Pore lamb! Her han's is all buinin' up wid fever. She's an awful sick chile, an' no mis-

take!" And the stronger woman carried her back to bed. But Dell seemed to feel Miss Sherburne's presence, and raved like a wild creature. The poor lady was quite distraught. She went down on the porch, and awaited the coming of the doctor with the utmost anxiety.

Dinah soothed the child and bound plantain leaves on her wrists and feet, the remedy in which she placed unbounded faith. Cassy bathed her throbbing temples, and presently she subsided into unquiet moanings, as she lay with her eyes half open.

"That's the doctor!" cried Cassy, as she heard the tramp of the horse's feet.

Dinah looked and nodded her head with serious significance.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW.

MISS SHERBURNE went forward to meet Doctor Carew. He was a man of fine presence, shrewd but kindly eyes, and a rather humorous expression of face. He had known Edward Sherburne and considered him a foolish young fellow, to throw up home and adoring relatives for the sake of one girl, when there were so many delightful girls in the world. He had been extremely sorry for his death before the breach was healed. He had a very strong feeling that the widow and child should be brought home, but, as all the family seemed agreed on the opposite course, he was not called upon to advise. Mr. Sherburne's illness had rendered him incapable, later on, of taking any important step in the case.

Sympathy had certainly been on the side of the family. Leonard Beaumanoir was a great favorite, and it seemed a shame that such a fine young fellow should be crowded out of Sherburne House. After Lyndell's arrival an impression had gone abroad that she was not quite presentable, that there was low birth on the one side and questionable associations; that she was indeed quite a savage, and must be tamed before she could be allowed much liberty. Miss Carew had been over to call, but she had not seen the child. The doctor was too much engrossed to pay attention to neighborhood gossip.

Now Miss Sherburne made a few brief explanations concerning the child's wild journey, at which the doctor gave a rather prolonged ejaculation that partook of the

nature of a whistle. She cited the fatigue, the ungovernable temper, the utterly undisciplined nature, and the result, which was a fever.

They slowly ascended the stairs. The child was tossing restlessly, and though her eyes turned a moment toward the strange figure, she evinced no comprehension. He stood there gravely, testing temperature and pulse, making examinations into her apparent physical conditions. Her flesh was flabby, and she showed great depression.

"Looks like a rather serious case," he announced quietly. "Do you know if there was violence used to compel her to return?"

"Mr. Whittingham did not mention any such proceeding," she answered indifferently.

"Whittingham! Oh, yes; he is one of the executors." And the doctor resolved to see him. "It is brain fever, and she has had some shock upon a rather enfeebled physical state."

"Doctor, she has the strength and energy of a dozen children, the rudest sort of health."

"She may have had—she hasn't it now. There is not as much to work on as I should like. Still, we will do our best. I should advise you to cut her hair—she will lose it in any event. Who is to do the nursing?"

Dell had moved a little. She suddenly opened her eyes wide, and they encountered Miss Sherburne. Uttering a wild shriek, she sprang into Cassy's arms.

"Take her away!" she cried, in a terrified tone. "Take her away! She will shut me up in the dark!"

The doctor motioned the lady aside and soothed Lyndell, gently laying her down again.

"That is nothing uncommon," he said reassuringly, as a spasm of undefined terror seized Miss Sherburne.

"Oh, doctor," she cried, "you will save her, you *must* save her! Have everything, do everything to the utter-

most. You believe that none of us desire to profit by her death?" She must rehabilitate her conscience by this protest. And if the child went on accusing her of murder!

"My dear madam, we know all you Sherburnes too well. Do not excite yourself. You will be of more importance outside the sick-room. As for the nurses—there must be two"—and he considered the women before him.

"Ef you want a fus'-rate borned nuss," said Dinah, who knew she could not leave her important post, "dar's dat Lizzy Jackson. She went over to old Madam Archer's, an' dey couldn't say 'nuff 'bout her. She's jes' as good as a doctor hisse'f at de quarters."

"Lizzy? Yes, I have seen her. She is an excellent hand. I'll go down to the quarters myself and see her, if you have no objection," to Miss Sherburne.

"Oh, doctor, is it anything contagious? She may have caught some disease in her headlong rushing about." Miss Sherburne's countenance was filled with dismay.

"There will be no contagion," decisively. "It is not even typhoid fever. But we shall need the most exact attendance. I wish we had a system of trained nurses. There must be two regular attendants, and one to relieve."

"Have Lizzy, then, by all means."

"I will be in again this afternoon. Meanwhile——" And sitting down he took out his medicine case. Then he ordered ice for her head, and gave some minute directions.

"You will find her alternating between stupor and delirium. Do not excite her in any manner, she has no strength to waste. Now"—to Cassy, "follow directions implicitly."

Then he went over to the quarters and engaged Lizzy

for the night nurse. His patients were far apart, and he was on the go all the morning, around the byroads. As he was driving through Ardmore he encountered Mr. Whittingham just closing his office door.

"Jump in and allow me to drive you home," said he. "I have a matter of importance to discuss."

Mr. Whittingham acquiesced. As soon as he was seated the doctor made his startling announcement.

"I want some enlightenment. The child, from physical indications, ought to be strong enough to throw off any ordinary attack. This is serious, and I find her greatly prostrated. Indeed, her fight through will depend on how good a constitution she has back of her. And no child of that age ought to have brain fever! What about these New York people? Daring procedure, wasn't it?" and he laughed in spite of his anxiety. "We should have thought it plucky for a boy!"

Mr. Whittingham was very much astonished.

"Nothing happened there unless it was excess of emotion. She had the good sense to know she must return, and I doubt even if there was any persuasion used. The Murrays are kindly, large-hearted people." Then Mr. Whittingham went generously over the past, and the love they had given an unknown and apparently friendless child.

"I see, I see!" and the doctor nodded energetically. "So that made the change a severe one for her—but there are nearly always children at Sherburne House. What have they been doing all summer with her?"

"She has been kept closely at her studies—too closely, I think. There was a governess until a week or so ago."

"You don't mean that child came fresh from a school where they had been cramming her to the utmost, and has had no respite all this long, warm summer?"

Well, well! I don't wonder at the brain fever. Is she a slow scholar?"

"I think her unusually intelligent. She is shrewd, humorous—I do not know as I can quite make you comprehend"—and the lines of the speaker's face settled into perplexity; "but Mrs. Murray is like a big sister to the children. They are wonderfully good too, ready, obliging, gay-tempered, and are not much governed by rule. The discipline at Sherburne House has been rather strict."

The petty persecutions, the confinement, extra tasks and deprivations Mr. Whittingham was too honorable to mention. They were so unlike anything he had associated with Miss Sherburne that they seemed a sort of temporary madness in his mind, roused by her disappointment, and having the newcomer so different from her own family.

"One can dimly guess at the scene after you left," and the doctor laughed. "It was a daring step, but it seems to me a child made ordinarily comfortable would not have ventured upon it. Of course it was an immense disappointment to them all. I never approved of Ned's short-sighted marriage, but I have a feeling that if they had forgiven the young couple and brought them home he would be alive to-day. I can see Miss Sherburne is very nervous, ultra-conscientious about the child dying on her hands. Theme for some curious mental processes, Whittingham," and the doctor gave a short laugh. "We never know quite what we are capable of until some lightning flash reveals the villain in us."

"But you will do your utmost," gasped Mr. Whittingham, fixing his startled eyes on the doctor.

"I should do my utmost for a beggar, although I felt certain he must starve six months hence. In an emergency I shall send for Caswell; city people get a much wider range of practice."

"And you consider her critically ill?" Mr. Whittingham said, in a retrospective way, as if he could hardly believe in the opinion he had listened to a moment or two ago. "The whole matter has been wrongly managed. There has been too much friction, too much antagonism. And yet, Carew, you know Miss Sherburne too well to think she would be hard or sharp deliberately. It is from a mistaken idea. And Miss Lyndell is a little outside the ordinary."

"And kicks over the traces?" The doctor nodded, with a half-humorous light in his eyes.

"I shall insist upon her being sent to school as soon as she recovers," the lawyer said nervously.

"School!" The doctor raised his brows. "There won't be much school for her the next six months. Still, she does look as if she possessed a fine physique. And I'm obliged to you, Whittingham, for the light you have let in upon the subject. I can go on surer grounds."

"And you will try your utmost?" The buggy had halted before the lawyer's residence.

"Try? Well, though we all have a secret sympathy with young Beaumanoir, none of us I take it want constructive murder on our consciences. Good-day."

"Poor child," the doctor mused softly. "One can understand how thirsty she must have been for one draught of the old love, to go all that distance for hugs and kisses. Miss Sherburne is a woman of fine honor, too. But it is a kind of playing at stepmother business, and that doesn't come easy to many women. There must be some divine grace in it. I wish I could take Neale over there presently to set things a little straight. But just now it is only to fight with that tremendous unseen force we call disease."

When he went back about mid-afternoon he picked up Lizzy, to see for himself what effect she would have

on the sick girl. He found Dell in the midst of a raging paroxysm. She had opened her eyes suddenly and seen Miss Sherburne standing by her, he learned on questioning Cassy. "My child," he exclaimed with a gentle kind of peremptoriness, "my child, you must be quieter. There," placing his arm gently around her, "it is all right now. See, you are safe, quite safe."

"Oh, papa Murray!" she cried, hiding her face on his broad chest. "Do not let them take me away! I don't want any of their fortune. I just want you and mamma and Con and Tessy. Oh, you do love me!" in a tone of piercing entreaty.

"Love you? Yes, my child." And he gathered her in his arms with a tender pity.

"I'm so tired, so tired," she moaned.

He soothed and quieted her. Then he beckoned Lizzy to come nearer. Dell looked at her out of dull, fever-glazed eyes, but evinced no repugnance.

"You will watch her at night, having some one within call, and now I must give you directions. Do not fail in a single particular. Remember, a life depends upon it!" Then he explained the remedies and their frequency, the necessity of not allowing her to waste any strength in wild exertion that could be prevented.

Lizzy listened intelligently and asked a few questions. Dell dozed off, muttering now and then.

"Cut her hair as soon as possible," said the doctor. "Take the time when she seems in the deepest stupor. Use plenty of ice. And remember all directions."

Miss Sherburne he found very much worn and depressed; and his kindest sympathies were aroused.

"You must go out and take the fresh air, and have some diversion for your mind, or you will be ill. We must all hope for the best."

To a certain extent Miss Sherburne was a conscientious woman, but she possessed a narrow, justifying con-

science. There were people who would have treated Lyndell more severely, she felt certain. After all, she had not said half the things she intended. Yet the accusation troubled her. She had no real proof, she felt within her soul. Still, she had read guilt so clearly in Dell's face, and where else *could* she have obtained the money? If she had found it anywhere, it was her duty to set about discovering the owner at once. Certainly she had committed a grave fault.

Cassy was sent to bed that night. Dinah came in and laid on the lounge, and Miss Sherburne went to one of the spare rooms, for she was really suffering from loss of sleep. Dell was very restless, but Lizzy managed beautifully. She crooned to her in a low, soft voice, hymns with a plaintive strain; she talked and soothed.

But the next day told too plainly that the struggle would be an unusually severe one. The fever ran very high, the intervals of stupor grew longer, and yet it was not sleep, but a sort of drowsy unconsciousness. She said little that had any coherence, though she seemed always aware of Miss Sherburne's entrance, and would shriek out in terror. It angered her that Dell should exhibit such a violent antipathy, even when not in possession of her normal senses. But she urged the doctor continually to use his utmost efforts. He could see she was in the grasp of a terrible dread; indeed, he felt that the child's death would be a severe blow to her, little as she really liked her.

So passed a week, with no change for the better. Cassy and Lizzy were excellent nurses, and Dinah was on hand to fill any breach. The fever ravages were fearful. Dell grew thin by the hour. Her eyes were sunken, her lashes and brows seemed as if stuck in wax rather than a normal growth. Doctor Carew's heart sank within him as he noted many unfavorable evidences.

Now and then she begged piteously for Mamma Murray.

"Do you think we had better send?" Miss Sherburne inquired tremulously, one morning.

"She would not recognize any one, and her foster-mother's grief might prove a dangerous thing. You see, now and then she takes me for papa Murray, as she calls him. No, it is not worth while to send at present."

Doctor Carew had mailed an account of the case to his friend Caswell at Baltimore, who approved of the treatment. But at length he begged him to come and remain one night, the crucial night, it seemed to him.

"She must have some sleep," the newcomer said, "or she cannot hold out much longer."

"Anodynes are useless," was the reply.

"Then we must proceed to extremities."

All night the two men watched, noting every feeble respiration, and counting the moments of wide-eyed wakefulness. Miss Sherburne would not leave the next room, where she sat in a tense strain of anxiety. The hours wore on. The shrilling of the countless insects in the thickets grew slow and slower, then died out. The air was moist and sweet. There was no moon, but the stars seemed to hang low in the heavens in unwonted splendor.

Dell was so strangely quiet now that it seemed as if death had begun his work. Her pulse was a mere thread. Almost at dawn she roused suddenly.

"Mamma Murray," she cried weakly; "Mamma Murray!"

Doctor Carew motioned to Lizzy, who took the child in her arms.

"I am so tired, so tired," she moaned. "I have walked so far! But the money is all safe. Papa gave it to me. Oh, must I go back?"

Then it seemed as if she was gone. Lizzy uttered a low, despairing cry.

Miss Sherburne stood like a ghost in the doorway.

"Is it—oh, Heaven help me to bear it!" And she wrung her hands.

"No," returned Doctor Caswell. But it was so like death. There was a faint flutter in her throat as Lizzy laid her down at a sign from the doctor, who administered a stimulant. Another flutter—a languid heart-beat, then she lay motionless, with her eyes closed, the long bronze lashes glittering on her cheek.

Daybreak looked in at the window. The soft grey was tinged with rose, then mingled with gold and hung in quivering sheets.

"Keep up her strength with any stimulant that will do it for the next ten or twelve hours. The fever is conquered. If she can sleep, all will be well. But it has been a hard fight."

"I will send you over to the station," said Doctor Carew. "You must know how grateful I am. But I had better remain for an hour or two."

"Remain by all means. Do not let her drop down a moment." Then the two men shook hands.

Doctor Carew watched her with infinite solicitude. It seemed at moments as if she did really stop breathing. How wonderfully she had changed in less than a fortnight. No one could complain of the superabundant flesh now. Her very nose had sharpened. Her chin was nearly all a deep dimple, and her hands were waxen white as they lay helpless, the fire and strength gone out of them. She drowsed on, now and then opening her eyes wide for a moment or two and seeming to listen for something.

"Oh," Miss Sherburne said, coming to the door, "*will she live?* Doctor Caswell has gone ——"

"We can hardly call it a hope. She has come now

to the crucial test of real strength. But the fever is over."

There was an expression of intense relief on the lady's face, and her lips quivered, but she could not utter her thanks.

About ten the doctor took his leave. Dell lay utterly quiet, sleeping a little, but quite indifferent to surrounding objects.

In the afternoon when he came he found her in the same state. Her pulse he fancied stronger.

"You will need to watch her with the utmost care to-night," he said to Lizzy. "If there is any dropping down, give her this at once. Do not leave her for a moment. I have almost made a doctor of you"—and he smiled. "I wish I could always be supplemented by as efficient a nurse."

But that night there seemed a better feeling everywhere. Cassy slept on the lounge in Miss Sherburne's room, Dinah being quite knocked up by her half vigils. Two or three times Lizzy was fearful Dell had gone, but the morning found a decided amendment in the strength of pulse.

"I think now she will pull through," said the doctor. "Do not excite her in any way. Answer her questions simply, without any air of mystery or fear."

It was almost night when Dell opened her eyes languidly and fixed them on Cassy's face.

"I feel so queer," she said presently. "So weak, and—what has happened, Cassy? I was going to New York—I can't seem to remember——"

"You have been ill. But you are going to get well now," replied Cassy, with a smile.

"Did I come back?" with a perplexed expression. "Oh, yes; this is Sherburne House and my own room. I feel as if I had been in a dreadful railroad accident and was crushed to a jelly. And I am so tired"—piteously.

"Lie still, then, dear!" soothingly.

"Some one was here—" trying to think connectedly.
"Was it—oh, it wasn't Mamma Murray? And she sang as mamma used to the babies—an Irish croon, she called it, but it was so sweet."

"Lizzy has been here. Lizzy from the quarters, nursing you. And Dinah."

"It must have been Lizzy." Then Dell fell asleep again.

After that day she had only to get well. Yet it was odd how party spirit had again stirred the household and the quarters. If young Missy, who, so far, had taken no hold upon any one's affections, should die, Mas'r Leonard would sure come into his own. The stories of Dell's escapade and her Northern friends had been wildly exaggerated, until the child came to be wrapped around with a sort of mysterious influence—bewitched fairly. There was not the rejoicing that would naturally have been given to a favorite, yet a great strain was lifted.

No one felt this so intensely as Miss Sherburne. She gave most fervent thanks, and they were honest, sincere. Lyndell's death would have laid a heavy burden on her conscience. She could not resolve to her own satisfaction why this should be so, it was one of those unsolvable mysteries. Surely she had tried to do her duty to the uttermost, confident in her own judgment. That she might have taken the orphan girl to her heart, and learned to love her in making her welcome, did not seem any conscientious obligation. She had begun by putting herself in bitter opposition; by taking up a heavy burden unjustly laid upon them all by her nephew's wilful step. It was to be borne with the heroism of martyrdom. And how often we stretch ourselves on the cross of prejudice, and suffer from spear thrusts, when all could have been avoided by one clasp of tender love, of the

divine charity that does not make a bulwark of the "suffering long," but is simply "kind."

She stole softly into the room the next morning while Dell was asleep. Yes, there had been a great change. She would not have known the child elsewhere. The roundness, that to her mind savored of vulgarity, was gone. The fine clear skin was like marble. She noted now the lengthened, almond-shaped eyes with their long, curling lashes and blue-veined lids, the small shell-like ear, the white throat into which the chin gradually sloped. True, the mouth was wide, but she remembered that Dell's teeth were fine and regular.

The child stirred. Was it the curious inward consciousness of the glance? She opened her eyes.

"Oh, go away!" she cried, in affright. "Go away!"

Cassy sprang to her side. Miss Sherburne walked stiffly into the next room, and unconsciously paused before her dressing table, where her eyes fell upon her own pale, disturbed face.

It seemed to her distorted mental vision that she had held out an olive-branch of concession, which had been rudely thrust back. That Dell was hardly restored to her proper mental state she did not take into account. She felt hurt, angered, and swung back to her olden bitterness.

"There *is* a race antagonism," she said to herself. It had, since the freeing of the slaves, become a sort of shibboleth to excuse lifelong prejudices. "I shall do my duty by her, of course, but it would be folly to dream of anything nearer."

She had really hoped, through the delirium, that the child might explain unconsciously how she came to find the money. But beyond a few references to it, the subject had not seemed a haunting one. No person was any wiser. And though her faith was somewhat shaken in

her first suspicion, what else could she think until Dell saw fit to confess?

The correspondence between herself and Mrs. Beaumanoir had been almost daily. The latter was confident of the child's recovery. Miss Sherburne felt now that she had unduly alarmed herself. She wrote to her niece that all was progressing favorably, and that it might perhaps be as well to take up the matter of the governess. The Beaumanoir family would remain all the month at Atlantic City, where Mrs. Lepage expected to join them on her return from Europe and accompany them home, when she would make a visit at Sherburne House, preparatory to settling herself in a home of her own. Miss Burtis had resumed her duties. If this Mrs. Fanshawe proved to be the proper person, it would be as well to engage her.

Then Miss Sherburne restored the household to its usual orderly routine. Dinah was excused from further attendance, and indeed she was quite glad to get back to her own department and the entertaining gossip of the quarters. That Missy had come through such an awful illness was nothing more nor less than a miracle of the Lord.

"Dar ain't no look now for po' Mas'r Leonard," and she shook her head lugubriously. "Not dat anybody be wantin' Miss Dell to die, but ef't bin de Lord's will, we'd all bowed our heads like bulrushes in de storm. Seems queer dat ar little gal from furrin parts, an' nobody knowin' who her mudder was, should come in an' be missus here, but so 'tis, an' ol' Miss, she take it very gran' and fine, but I see it go deep. But ef ebber enny one done der dooty, it jest was ol' Miss. Dar ain't notin' on her conshuns. She hab de doctor day an' night, an' todder big doctor frum Bolt'more, and Lizzy nebber takin' her eyes offen her at night, ner Cassy by day, an' I jus' done beat out. Rudder cook in de kitchen fer a

month solid den bein' called up any time o' night. Notin' like good reg'lar sleep for folks. But Miss Dell, she jus' done squeeze tru, and dat a fact.. An' she look ies' like a ghost. Curis' where all de fat go to!"

CHAPTER XVI.

GATHERING TANGLED THREADS.

DELL lay in a delicious state for days, sleeping most of the time, for nature now made large demands to recruit her wasted forces. She smiled a little at the doctor, she knew Cassy and Lizzie, and that was quite enough. They fed her, they bathed her face and hands with aromatic water, and changed her pillows now and then, and she was supremely content. The disease had left her too weak to think.

But one morning she put her hand to her head.

"O Cassy!" she cried in affright. "Has my hair been cut? Who did it?"

"Dear Miss Dell, the doctor ordered it. And what was left is all falling out. You see the fever was so high——"

"I never was ill before. Has it been long? I can't remember. I came back from the Murrays and—I stood there in Miss Sherburne's room—and she said—or did I dream it, Cassy?"

"Don't think about it, dear," the girl said soothingly.

"Cassy," she began again presently, "I *must* think of it. It comes out—just as you unravel something. Tell me, tell me truly; did Miss Sherburne ever lose any money? Was any ever taken from her drawer? For I am sure she said——"

Dell began to flush with excitement.

"I do not think she ever really missed any—oh, Miss Dell, don't go so wild, and you so weak."

"Cassy, *do* you think I would take Miss Sherburne's money?" she asked, with feverish eagerness.

"No, Miss Dell, I really do not. There, dear—" in a pleading voice, with her soft intonation.

"I am glad some one believes in me," and she gave a long, dry sob. "And I did not find the money in the house or very near it. I don't believe it is Miss Sherburne's! When I get well I shall hunt for the real owner."

"Oh, Miss Dell, the doctor said you were not to be excited." Cassy's alarm touched her.

"Was I delirious?" Dell asked presently.

"Yes. But you were not very coherent. And you said nothing about that. So, if you had died, you would have kept your secret."

"Did they think I was going to die?" Dell asked, startled.

"Oh, Miss Dell!" implored Cassy. "But you've come through now, and you are going to get well—if you will be a little careful. Oh, please do!"

"I want to get well," she returned slowly. "I want to live to be a woman. I have thought of so many things to do. And the world is so beautiful. It would be hard to lie in the cold, dark grave," and she shuddered.

"You must not say another word. Drink this and go to sleep," entreated Cassy.

Dell took the draught, but she could not sleep. By degrees every part of her brain was roused. She picked up dropped ends—she reunited broken threads, and presently thought in a tolerably direct line. Of course she came to that terribly unjust accusation. If Miss Sherburne had missed the money, she would have made inquiries before. But to call her a thief!

Dell's training had been frankly simple, wholesome, and unconventional. They were expected to be as fair

and honest with each other at the Murrays as with their parents. It was not a system of continual looking for faults and disbelief in all higher qualities. Densie believed her children the best children in the world, and when they fell below her standard, her sorrow was such a poignant thing to them that they hastened to make amends. And looking at it in the clearer light, a great misgiving throbbed through the weakened pulses. She had been wrong all the way through.

Late in the afternoon the doctor came in.

"Hallo!" he said, studying her pulse and the troubled light in her eyes. "What have you been doing, Undine?"

"What did Undine do?" she asked, with a faint smile.

"Well, she was happy enough until she found her soul. Then there was no end of trouble. Who has been worrying you? You are to have only a body for the next fortnight."

"No one. At least—I asked Cassy some questions."

"And tumbled yourself up and down, poor Pilgrim! Do you know that doctors have a sort of wicket gate where people can drop their burthens? Why, I've a great closet full of other people's troubles."

Dell gave another faint little smile. "I have been very ill," she said presently.

"Yes. We made quite a big fight for you. And though you are a little battered and worn, as is natural after such a tussle, you are coming out all right," declared the doctor humorously.

"Yes—I want to get well. I have never been ill before."

"Oh, you do? Well, I wasn't quite sure a few days ago. However, that settles the point. Now we must have no more slipping back. You have been thinking

in French and Latin, and up and down the scale, and now you need not think at all. Did you ever see a bird dozing on a limb in the warm afternoon sunshine?"

"I don't know—" returned Dell slowly.

"Well, he is the most comfortable-looking thing alive. He takes a good grip of the limb, hunches up his shoulders, drops his head a little, half shuts his eyes, and the wind rocks him to and fro. It may rain the leaves off the trees next week, it may blow and snow next winter, his children may clamor for food next summer, but he has a good time *now*. He isn't going to make to-day lap over into the future years."

Dell laughed, with a sense of amusement.

"And I wouldn't lock up my knapsack until I really came to the bridge. You might want to take some old things out, and put some new ones in."

"What bridge? And what do you put in the knapsack?"

"Do you know anything about the old Egyptians? Well, they had some very good ideas. When a man died he had to walk over an extremely narrow bridge. Now, you see, if he wasn't well balanced it was rather critical. Then his soul had to be weighed in one scale and his good deeds in another, and if his good deeds went up to the beam he had to come back and start down at the foot of the line—in a pig, maybe."

"Why, that's transmigration," said Dell, with unwonted interest.

"Yes. Well, there is some of it still in the world. We cross the bridge here—bridges of different kinds, and God lets us begin over again—just where we made the last mistake. And you may be sure there is some work for us to do. Pretty soon you may look up yours, but you can have a few weeks' rest."

"Oh, I wish you could stay and talk"—and Dell's eyes brightened. A faint glow tinged her pallid face.

He shook his head. "A doctor's time is worth a good deal. It would bankrupt you. But when you get stronger you might go out driving with me. The time spent in going from place to place is not so profitable; I could afford you some of that. And now you are to be a good girl and try to get well. We are to press forward, you know."

Dell stretched out her thin white hand. "I like you so much," she said frankly.

"We will call this the beginning of good times. Now you must sleep and eat, and walk across the room and not worry about next year. There is the bird, you know."

"Yes," answered Dell cheerfully.

And surely there was no reason for not improving. Such soups and dainties as Dinah made, such care as Cassy bestowed upon her! Miss Sherburne exercised sufficient Christian charity to come in and wish her good-morning and good-night, but there was an intensified, if unspoken bitterness between them.

She grew stronger, she sat up in the great easy-chair, was pushed over to the window and watched for the doctor, who was always cheery and amusing. Still the old wish would haunt her—if she could only go away! One day she picked up the hand-glass.

"O Cassy," she cried in dismay, "do I look like that? How horribly thin I am! And my eyes are so big and so hollow underneath. And no hair to speak of! I wasn't pretty before, but I am a horrid fright."

"Everybody looks so after a severe illness. Once Miss Millicent was ill a long while and she looked worse than you, she was so dark and sallow."

"But she's beautiful now," returned Dell, with a sort of coveting longing in her voice. "I don't suppose I can ever be pretty. You ought to see Tessy Murray. She's just like a bright wild rose. And mamma was

beautiful, but at the last, when she was so thin and white, she did look a good deal as I do now."

Dell was wiping away some tears when a well-known step sounded on the stairs.

"Hi!" ejaculated Doctor Carew. "What's all this rain shower about?"

"I look so horrid!" Dell answered, trying to smile through the mist. "Oh, will my hair ever get beyond a stubble? and my eyes are like wells or caverns, and I am shaky and miserable!"

"Hear the sage of Craigenputtoch: 'When a man is miserable, what does it most of all behove him to do? He has to know that being miserable he has been unwise.' Now for the unwisdom. Did it arise from looking out on the sunshine?"

"No-o," admitted Dell.

"Well, take a good look. There's a fine bit of sky up there between the trees. And look at the elm and the hemlock nodding across the blue background. The sunshine is put in as a harmonizer between the green and blue. And over yonder there is a long line of it on the grass, and I dare say the little green blades cuddle up to it lovingly."

"But do you suppose I shall look so woebegone a great while?" she inquired anxiously.

"That depends. You may, if like the old woman you fret to

Skin and bone and bone and skin,
And leave no place for the fat to creep in.

And are you not a little ungrateful?"

"Ungrateful?" in surprise.

"I had counted on making a show patient of you. I thought people would soon be saying—why, there's Miss Sherburne, who was at death's door only a little while ago, and now she is round and rosy as a winter

pippin. What an excellent physician Doctor Carew must be!"

There was such a twinkle of fun in his eyes that she laughed. Then she said remorsefully:

"I wasn't thinking about the credit I owed you, when you have been so kind. I must try."

"Tears are not a fattening diet. And worry makes a crease in your forehead. Fretting is apt to spoil one's voice as well as one's temper. It's the sunshine that warms us all up and turns everything to gold."

"Oh," she said delightedly, "you are like papa Murray. He wouldn't let us be cross or have the dumps. And he was so merry."

"I suppose it was flattering to be taken for him; an interesting mistake you fell into at first. And I have a great respect for Mamma Murray, who was able to fill the heart and soul of a motherless little girl with so much love."

Dell was studying the doctor. "Oh, you *are* a little like him," she said delightedly. "He is not quite so stout. And he has lovely blue eyes that laugh, and can look so gravely sweet, and make you feel so sorry when you have been naughty. And I can never be Dell Murray any more. I *feel* changed. I am another girl, Lyndell Sherburne. And all my life is different," she said, with regretful pathos.

"Well, Miss Sherburne, if you moisten your bread with tears you will find it a poor staff. And I shall feel tempted to cross you off my books."

"Oh, doctor, please don't," she pleaded beseechingly.

He was holding her hand, when there was a soft rustle of a woman's gown and step in the adjoining room. Some indescribable sense of alarm or aversion sped through her pulses, and she seemed to cling more closely to the strong hand she held.

"Ah," thought the doctor, "all is not clear sailing."

"You see she is improving," said Miss Sherburne, in her well-bred, rather formal tone. "Do you not think she might be taken out soon for a little drive? The weather is so exceptionally fine."

"She hasn't the strength just yet. And now she must go back to bed. Plenty of sleep, plenty to eat, and nothing to think about until we get her sound in body again. There, my child, good-morning to you. Study the sunshine."

Miss Sherburne followed the doctor downstairs.

"Of course," she said, "there can be no doubt now about Lyndell's recovery."

"Not unless something new occurs," returned the doctor dryly.

"And there can be no thought of contagion?"

"Hardly—with brain fever."

"The Lepages are coming to stay for awhile. They have always spent part of the autumn here. There are two large girls and the baby, but they will have the opposite side of the house. Still, I should want to be quite certain of no danger to them."

"There cannot be the slightest, in the nature of things. When do they propose to come?"

"This has always been a home to them," said Miss Sherburne insistently. "My brother was very fond of his grandchildren. Of course there need be no disturbance for Lyndell. She will be kept quite apart."

"A little companionship of her own age and kind will not prove any detriment to her," said the doctor rather testily. "In a few days she may be able to be taken down on the porch in the sunshine."

"The Beaumanoirs will shut up their house at Atlantic City and return home next week. The Lepages came in from Europe on Saturday. Indeed, I have not seen my niece for eight months, and I think, as a family, we Sherburnes have a strong regard for each other."

"And a change will be an excellent thing for you," returned the doctor cheerfully. He noted how much thinner she had grown, and the careworn lines settling in her face. "Have them, by all means."

Yet, as he drove away, he could not help thinking of the little girl so unceremoniously set aside, whose rights were scarcely considered; who was looked upon in the light of an alien and not made altogether welcome. He leaned much more toward Mr. Whittingham's estimate as time went on. He was broad enough to see that it *was* hard for both sides, but Lyndell could not help becoming their thorn in the flesh. To punish the child for it was cruelly unjust.

Mrs. Lepage had been as incredulous and as deeply prejudiced as Miss Sherburne. She had gone abroad quite convinced that she should be able to detect or unearth some fraud. But she had had every clue traced only to prove its truth, and establish the pure, retiring, and courageous character of her brother's wife. Then there was a hope that the child might have met with some untoward fate; indeed, it seemed hardly possible that they could have been in America four years, and not presented their claim. And when the facts were really established, Mrs. Lepage took it more bitterly than Mrs. Beaumanoir.

She was met by her sister in the city, who came up to do some shopping, and to look after Mrs. Fanshawe. Mrs. Beaumanoir secretly hoped that she would find her objectionable. She had an obstinate faith that Dell would recover, and she decided upon the school, though from different motives from Mr. Whittingham. She had lost the slight sympathy she had experienced for the child. Dell's wild escapade and the question of the money shocked her immeasurably. Like Miss Sherburne, she could see no other solution to the mystery.

The danger for Dell was practically over when she

went up to the city. But it had hardly been appreciated by any of the family except Miss Sherburne. And that lady was secretly shocked at the indifference of Mrs. Beaumanoir, when *she* was really suffering from certain conscientious misgivings and nervous fears.

When the sisters met, the subject was all engrossing. What the child was really like, what present rights she had in the place so long considered a family home, and what could be done with her.

"Dear Aunt Aurelia," said Mrs. Lepage. "She is such a good, conscientious woman, and she has all the old family pride intensified by the almost isolated life she has led. The idea of worrying about the recovery of that miserable child, making it a morbid point of conscience lest any one should accuse her of not doing her whole duty! Because her death would be our gain, she is too nervously sensitive to contemplate it with any composure. But such children live through everything. And no doubt her delirium was half temper."

"Doctor Carew is not much of an alarmist. And he had a friend down one night. She was very ill, no doubt; but she is a great, rugged child with a positively oppressive personality. I think she will wear out Aunt Aurelia. I insist that she shall be sent to school. Auntie has some idea that she can best humanize and civilize her, but it will prove a futile undertaking. And now she is so anxious for me to learn what kind of a person this governess, a Mrs. Fanshawe, is. She must have come over in the steamer with you. She had charge of the Eustis girls!"

Mrs. Lepage uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Why, how *did* you come to hear of her? Irene Eustis is to be married to a very wealthy gentleman living up the Hudson, at Hyde Park, I think, and Emily is to enter Vassar. This Mrs. Fanshawe is a charming

woman, well-born, well-connected, whose family lost all during the war, and later her husband died. She is thoroughly well educated, and has a good fund of common sense. If we were settled, I should like to have her myself."

"The word came through the Whittinghams."

"I do not suppose this child's sickness can make any difference in our staying at Sherburne?" Mrs. Lepage said inquiringly. "You see we shall not be able to get into our Washington house before the 1st of January, and I had planned to spend the intervening time at Sherburne. We certainly have the right to visit Aunt Aurelia. It is *her* management and wisdom that have brought up the estate from the devastation and depression of the war. And papa was feeble so long. I always said auntie had the business head of the family, and she has her rights in the place. This newcomer cannot turn her out?"

"Everything is to go on just the same until Miss Lyndell comes of age. And your visit will be a perfect god-send to aunt. She has worried over this matter until her nerves are worn threadbare, and some one must help her to take a common sense view of the case. We are not going to crowd out Edward's child, and no more than our duty is required of us. You and the girls can spend a week or two at Beaumanoir until the house is put in safe and proper order. Brain fever is not an infectious disease," and Mrs. Beaumanoir laughed.

"The wonder is that she had brains enough to be affected!" returned Mrs. Lepage rather sarcastically. "It just occurred to me that if you could persuade this Mrs. Fanshawe to accept, it would be an excellent thing for the girls all the autumn, and relieve me of present anxiety concerning them. I do not care to give them more than one finishing year at some stylish school, since they are not to be physicians or professors. I am rather old-

fashioned in my notions, and still believe in marriage. Yes, let us engage this Mrs. Fanshawe, if we can."

Mrs. Beaumanoir considered seriously. While she had explained the escapade, she had said nothing about the missing money. Certainly they should be put on their guard. If the child had these fearful, despicable habits, others should not run the risk of being wronged. Dishonesty, pilfering, was a greater sin in her estimation than the sudden act of an ungovernable temper. She had been thoroughly shocked by Aunt Sherburne's accusation, and only the intervention of Dell's illness had prevented her from flying at once to Sherburne and taking a hand in the attempted reformation of this misguided girl. It had hung over her with such a horrible nightmare influence that she would have been relieved to hear of Dell's death. Had Miss Sherburne explained that, while her suspicions remained the same, she had been unable to verify them, Mrs. Beaumanoir could better have understood her anxiety for the child's recovery. But she had written no word, not even given the vaguest hint, although she had begged her niece to say nothing to the children.

Mrs. Beaumanoir confided the wretched story to her sister, who was not less horrified. Yet what solution appeared more natural. She had wheedled some money out of Mr. Whittingham, and the remainder must be secured by any means! She might even have persuaded herself that it was in one sense her own money.

"What miserable training the child must have had! What you tell me, Laura, convinces me that the best thing I can do will be to spend some time at Sherburne. I am not afraid of my own girls. Indeed, the Sherburnes have always been scrupulously honest. I think any one of us would sooner cut off our right hand than take what did not belong to us. And *my* children have been trained to abhor and despise dishonesty. I

can see now why Aunt Sherburne is not willing to have her sent to school. She would disgrace us in no time. O Laura! why should this terrible misfortune be sent upon us? How could Edward have been so blind?"

It was settled then that they would look up Mrs. Fanshawe and make an arrangement with her, and that Mrs. Lepage, having opportunities to study Lyndell, could reach a more decisive and perhaps truer conclusion than Aunt Sherburne was able to. Upon that would depend in a large degree the young girl's future training.

Meanwhile Sherburne House was being made ready for the coming guests. These two rooms in the L could be kept so entirely separate, and Edith's favorite part had always been the front of the main house, her girlhood's apartment. Nancy swept and shook and dusted, brought out curtains and rugs from the great cedar press, beat up and aired pillows and blankets, took the Chinese vases out of the wide fireplaces, for soon the evenings would begin to grow cool. There was a pleasant excitement about it all that broke the tense strain under which Miss Sherburne had been living. She felt the need of the companionship of her equals. And what course to pursue with Dell was a sort of overhanging terror, night and day. The child shrank from her, looked away when she entered the room, answered her questions in a cold, constrained tone. These were suggestions of a mind ill at ease, perhaps guilt. She did not dare accuse her again; she was afraid of discussing the point in her weak state. She longed to set Cassy at work in unraveling the mystery, but she was too innately proud to descend to this kind of familiar equality with a servant. She had asked Cassy if Dell had thrown any light on the subject during her ravings, and she felt confident that Cassy would inform her of any half-confession the child might make. The next steps could not be taken at present.

Cassy informed Dell of the preparations. She had

heard about her cousins before : Harry and Gifford, growing into young manhood ; Ethel and Alice, twins of a little past fourteen, and the baby, as Florence was still called, a lovely child of nearly five. The boys had been spending the summer with their cousins at Atlantic City, the girls had been abroad with their parents. Now the boys were in school.

Dell dreaded the arrival of guests, especially girls of her own age. It seemed to her, as Cassy said, that all the Sherburnes were handsome. Hitherto it had been a matter of no moment whether she was dowered with good looks or not, but suddenly she had become unduly sensitive. She studied her thin face surreptitiously, feeling more and more disgusted with the staring, sunken eyes, the pallid lips, the forlorn head with its fuzzy, scanty crop. No, never before had she looked like this ! The doctor might recommend bright thoughts and plenty of sunshine, but oh, of what avail was the sunshine when one's heart was so heavy, and what could satisfy her sad, aching, hungering soul.

Still, she improved. Dinah carried her down on the porch in the sunshine one day, and she lay there noting the early autumn changes, and drinking in the fragrant air, being gently wooed to a happier frame of mind.

Just then the Beaumanoir carriage drove up. The family had returned and Miss Sherburne was sent for, as Mrs. Lepage was impatient to see her. It was a tiresome, uneventful day ; for no one came, not even the doctor, who no longer made regular daily calls.

For the next three days it rained—not continuously, but much of the time, a depressing drizzle. Dell heard all of the news there was to tell. Mrs. Fanshawe, the new governess, had come and was to instruct the twins from now until Christmas, when they would take possession of the new house Mr. Lepage was fitting up at Washington.

"And I do hope you will soon be able to resume your lessons," said Miss Sherburne.

It seemed to Dell that this was the cruelest touch of a cruel fate. She crept into bed a most miserable girl, and comforted herself with bitter weeping.

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW ATMOSPHERE.

"NEALE," Doctor Carew said to his sister that same dismal evening, as they sat together in the old home-room as it had been called for half a century, "Neale, I have a bit of work for you to take in hand."

She was a fair, delicate woman of fifty or thereabout, with a soft pink in her still rounded cheeks, beautiful and gracious curves to the lips, a rather long neck, around which lay a cloud of soft illusion tied on the breast with a pale lavender ribbon, and the ends crossing fichu-wise. Her hair, rather thin, light, and now a little threaded with silver, was a mass of lovely waves, Nature's gift. She wore a tiny square of lace, the point drooping to the forehead. Her figure had always been slim and it still preserved an exquisite pliancy and roundness. She sat in her high-backed chair, her slender fingers busy with some knitting, odd little shells for a counterpane. She glanced up with a soft, inquiring smile, and said, "Well?"

"I want that little Sherburne girl over here for a week or so—perhaps longer. I want you to comfort her, and cuddle her up, and get some human warmth in her soul."

"The child that ran away?"

"Yes. She is not doing as well as she should."

"What is the trouble?" Cornelia Carew glanced up with a sympathetic expression, that, her brother always said, would coax the secrets out of a stone.

"There are a good many troubles. First, no one realizes how weak and shaky her nerves are; I do not be-

lieve they can understand how ill she has been. She is utterly friendless and alone. Then the Lepages are coming to-morrow, two bright, pretty girls—the twins—with their heads full of Europe and everything. Miss Lyndell is certainly shorn of what little good looks she may have possessed. Yet she has beautiful velvety brown eyes and long bronze lashes, and a broad, fine forehead. I think her face is noble. It may be grand sometime, but it will never be called pretty. When she is not so deadly thin she must have some dimples, although hers is more of a cleft chin. The contrast with health and joyousness will be hard to bear."

"I heard she was extremely plain. And beauty is something of a Sherburne heritage."

"If I had my way every woman should be handsome," cried the doctor vehemently. "Then the plain ones could not be made miserable by their more fortunate sisters! At first she seemed stout and suggestive of coarseness, now she is thin and suggestive of misery. She dreads these visitors—there is much that is inharmonious between herself and her aunt, and she is *not* getting well. Her future health depends upon her entire recovery now; her usefulness as well, for if she drops into a nervous, easily depressed state, she will be a terror to those around her, and a burthen to herself. It is a case of unfriendly atmosphere. Change is positively necessary."

"But could you manage it without giving offence? Of course the child's being in the world was a great disappointment to them, and if she is out of harmony——"

"I think no one has tried to draw her within harmony," said the doctor rather gruffly. "But I will do Miss Sherburne the justice to say that she absolutely fought for the child's life in all outside influences. Still the child seemed in mortal, deadly terror of her, and de-

clared in her delirium that she hated her. She firmly believes that the whole family grudge her her very life."

"O Randolph, how terrible! I think Miss Sherburne is trying her utmost to be fair."

"The trying is so palpable. The unfairness also. Can't a child tell when those around are unfriendly? I am sure a dog can. But the Murrays loved her passionately. Think of their keeping her four years just like one of their own. Why, there *must* be something attractive about her. She has a strong will and a great deal of repression; then she is wonderfully frank on the other side, a sort of tangled up compound, that the years only can bring into harmonious lines."

"But how will you be able to arrange it? If she were poor or friendless it would be easy enough."

"I shall attack the fortress and take the measure thereof. Not being on the witness stand, you see I am not compelled to confess the *whole* truth"—and the humorous twinkle came into his eye—"so I shall save my own skin. I have been wanting to take her out to drive, but the days have been so wretched. And to-day she had dropped down to nothing, indulged in unlimited tears, and I had not the heart to scold her. But a change she must have. And we have taken patients in before—to be comforted and medicated."

"Generally the friendless."

"Why, there was Mrs. Tryon!"

Miss Carew laughed.

"You know she would have taken us to Europe, endowed us with fortunes—anything. I never saw a more grateful soul."

"Randolph, we have always been friends with the Sherburnes. It will not do to offend them."

"Well, do you consent?" rather testily.

"Why, of course. I must confess I should like to

know something about the child. I have not even seen her yet."

"They have considered her a sort of barbarian," he said dryly.

Then the doctor took up his magazine again. Miss Neale resumed her knitting, and thought of the child to whom the summer had proved so eventful.

The home-room was a curious conglomerate of comfort. It was large, with a western and southern exposure, cheerful with windows, bright in cold weather with a fire of logs in the immense chimney. In the centre was the doctor's big desk-like table, that had innumerable drawers and was always littered with books and papers. There was an old-fashioned bookcase, a sort of cabinet *escritoire* filled with what we now term *bric-à-brac*, a roomy sofa, a piano, and Miss Neale's corner. Here was her workstand, the table for her lamp; a bracket that always held a bowl of flowers winter and summer.

Connected with this by a short passage was the regular office. On the other side a parlor, dining-room, and kitchens innumerable stretching out gardenward. The house stood a little on the outskirts of Ardmore, and had a thicket of woods, a rather ruinous old orchard still yielding some choice fruit, and a kitchen garden. Here Miss Cornelia had lived all her life; here the doctor had brought his sweet young wife, an orphan then and in delicate health, and after the birth of her son she had faded away like a snowdrop. Then the two had gone on their apparently uneventful way, but their names had become household words, as they had become the friends, of many a household.

She was wondering a little about this child, who had been the object of many a gossip and much warm argument. Now and then she had been seen at church, but nowhere else. The opinion had gone abroad that she

was *not* presentable, that there was something about her worse than disagreeable to the Sherburnes. Callers had not been able to inspect her. Visitors knew of her being in her own room in disgrace, and she, rather than the family, had suffered by the vague mystery.

Miss Carew had studiously held herself aloof from the gossip, but, like many others, her sympathy was given to the Sherburnes. The doctor had exceeded his usual reticence during the earlier part of Dell's illness, when there was much anxiety as to its final termination. Later he had been rather confidential to his sister, and had uttered more than one denunciation on the manner in which the child's physical well-being had been endangered. But she was startled at this proposal.

The next day the doctor was at Sherburne House early in the morning and laid his plans before its mistress. She was more than surprised.

"What she wants," he said, in a determined sort of fashion, "is entire change. She is not as well as she was three days ago."

"But you agreed that she needed companionship. You thought the visit of my nieces would tend to rouse her. And I am anxious for her to get back to her studies. We have a most excellent governess engaged ——"

"Studies!" interrupted the doctor fiercely. "She must not do a bit of studying for three months to come, unless you want to ruin her health."

Miss Sherburne stood amazed.

"Doctor," she cried, "you said she had a strong constitution. And she was *too* robust. She had a boy's vigor and strength."

"You have changed all that, my dear madam. Remember, you have given her no vacation the whole summer. She had been used to the largest liberty, to a kind of athletic school training, and you have kept her too

much confined. Naturally, girls of her age do not run to brain fevers."

"But she was so behind in everything, so untrained, so ——" Miss Sherburne paused in vexation.

"You have *no* right to train her health away. She is not much beside a bundle of nerves now, and if you want a nervous, irritable, headachy girl on your hands for the next two or three years, to be sent away finally to some cure-all establishment, then you may urge her to get well and take up her studies. Why, she wants to be out of doors all next month; she ought not so much as look at a book! And just now she is naturally sensitive about her personal appearance. When you place her in contrast with your blooming nieces, it will depress her beyond measure. She will shrink into herself, grow silent, indifferent, morose. No, you had better let me take her for a fortnight or so. I shall have her out with me daily. Neale will cuddle her up like a hen with one chick. And you can enjoy your visitors without an anxious moment."

"It certainly is an extraordinary proposal, doctor! Really, you seem to doubt our doing her justice here. She has the best of care ——"

"Still it is *not* the right kind. The change of air and scene will do more for her than anything else. You cannot medicine the low, nervous depression, the shrinking from everybody, the over-sensitive brain that has already endured a terrible tension. And you certainly will enjoy yourselves better without her."

"Still I am not in the habit of shirking my duties," she returned haughtily.

"Then take up this one squarely. If the child recovers thoroughly, comes back to her normal health, there will be no trouble later on. Work her a little too hard now, try her shattered nerves too heavily, and toward spring you will be journeying around in search of

recuperation. And what is it but a neighborly visit? You can see her every day."

"Doctor, there are certain—yes, you force me to say it—grave faults in the child——"

"I'm used to faults and tempers. I'll risk hers. She needs a doctor's constant oversight for the next fortnight, to be kept cheerful, to be tranquillized, to have no sort of urging or strain. I think you will be sorry if you refuse this. And you know my sister will take the best care of her. I'll promise you there shall be no running away."

Miss Sherburne was dazed. She seemed like one waking from a dream. To allow Dell to go out of her hands with her secret unconfessed——

"I must think this over and perhaps take some advice——" She hesitated, and cast about vainly for a weightier argument.

"No one can advise you better than I on this subject," he said, with grave kindness.

She felt that this was true.

"Neale is coming over to call on Mrs. Lepage—I think I will bring her to-morrow. And you will have decided by that time."

Miss Sherburne could ill brook interference in any of her cherished schemes. She had a fancy that no one save herself could govern Lyndell. Yet she was forced to admit she had not succeeded very well so far. But she meant to persevere.

She went up to the invalid's room presently.

"Lyndell," she said, unaware how her voice sharpened, "Lyndell, the doctor seems rather disappointed about you. Are you making any effort to get well? And—your cousins——" she must say it, though she grudged the child the relationship—"will be here to-day. I thought they would help to amuse you. And you could drive out with them."

"They will not like me," returned Dell, with curious apathy. "And they are well and happy."

"You must get well. As for happiness, that is in your own hands. If you are going to be perverse and care for no one——"

There was a little sob. Dell was using her utmost efforts not to cry. But now that the passion found vent, she wept hysterically. She was so weak and miserable.

"Lyndell," said Miss Sherburne more gently, "what can I do for you?"

"Nothing, nothing; only to leave me alone"—and she turned her face to the wall.

Miss Sherburne obeyed her, angered by the repulse.

The load of trunks and boxes came over just before noon, and both families about mid-afternoon. It was a lovely day, with a suggestion of Indian summer in the hazy, red atmosphere. Lyndell listened to the gay greetings, the joyous tones, the trooping up and down, and her heart swelled with bitterness.

"Miss Dell," Cassy said, entering the room, "do you not want to sit up and let me arrange your gown prettily? They would all like to call on you. And the Beaumanoir children are anxious to see you."

"I can't see any of them—I positively can't!" she declared, trembling with terror. "I know I am a fright! And they will come in to criticise me—no, I will *not* endure it. You may tell them all! If they come I will cover my face with the sheet. I will not speak a word."

"Oh, Miss Dell——"

"No, no, no!" cried Dell passionately.

"I think Miss Dell must be worse," Cassy announced, returning from her fruitless errand. "She does not feel able to sit up or to see any one."

"Why, I thought she was getting well so rapidly!" said Mrs. Beaumanoir in surprise.

"I don't know what to make of the child. She is obstinacy personified!" replied Miss Sherburne.

So the young people had a merry time with but little thought of the poor girl upstairs, whose rights or feelings were so slightly considered. Their pleasure came first.

Dell somehow slept very uneasily that night, and awoke unrefreshed. Her breakfast went down almost untasted, and there was a dull ache everywhere.

But Miss Sherburne was not to be outgeneraled by a peevish whim. She brought Mrs. Lepage and the two girls into the room, as soon as Dell was dressed and sitting up by the window.

"This is your Aunt Lepage, Lyndell," she said impressively. "And these are your cousins Ethel and Alice. I did hope you would soon be well enough to take some pleasure in their society."

Lyndell flushed and her lips quivered, but she uttered no word. The twins glanced at each other with a sort of polite astonishment.

"You have been very ill, we heard," began Mrs. Lepage, with a touch of gracious stateliness.

She was tall, and somehow reminded Dell strongly of Miss Sherburne. Her silken morning gown was a dull crimson, with a profusion of cream lace and ribbons in both colors. An elegant diamond ring sparkled on her shapely hand, and there was about her a something imposing and grand that quite filled Dell with dismay. The girls she barely glanced at. They were fair, with light hair beautifully crimped, and soft pink cheeks; lovely, slim hands, and altogether, Dell was extinguished.

"You really must try to improve," she continued. "It is quite discouraging to your good aunt, who has been so anxious about you."

Dell's eyes filled with tears. She made strenuous

efforts to keep them from overflowing. These critical glances seemed to pierce at every vulnerable point, and, indeed, it appeared to her sensitive, shrinking nerves as if every point was utterly defenceless. Oh, would they ever go! She must scream or throw herself out of the window in her desperate agony. They were talking among themselves. The sound rang in her ears, the words were a jumble of confusion.

"What a horrid fright!" declared Mrs. Lepage, when they were downstairs again. "And certainly stupid! Why, she does not answer a question with common politeness. She looks wretchedly, not at all as if she were recovering."

Miss Sherburne was troubled at this remark.

"Doctor Carew is not so sanguine as he was. He wishes to take her for a fortnight or so and see what he can do."

"Oh, let her go, aunt, by all means. Such a woe-begone face is enough to give well people the horrors. And I am afraid you never will reap much gratitude for the devotion you have given her. Laura and I both think her a most unpromising specimen. She has not a good face, say what you will. And it is an awful shame that she is ever to be mistress here. But there—life is uncertain. We cannot tell what will happen in seven years."

"You think you would let the doctor take her?"

Miss Sherburne asked this with a feverish eagerness.

"Why, certainly. She is fit for nothing, and only a sort of marplot here. We shall all feel more at ease without her. Sickness is so depressing."

It was almost noon when the doctor drove over. He had a lady in the buggy—some one to call on Miss Sherburne, Dell supposed; as they lingered so long. She was all in a quiver when he came up, so full of suppressed excitement that she leaned her forehead

against his breast and cried as if her heart would break.

"My child," he said, "my poor little kitten, what has gone amiss with you? I want you to hearten up, to listen to some news—but may be you won't like it, and I have fought lions, almost, to bring it about. Come, cheer up a bit. Do you really wish to hear it?"

Dell raised her thin white face, still wet with tears.

"I am going to carry you off to my den. I have persuaded the powers that be, how absolutely necessary it is, if they want you to recover. And I have brought over my sister, so you will not be afraid to venture."

"To go—away?" gasped Dell. "To go anywhere out of Sherburne House! It kills me. It is like a great weight coming down on me, and I feel crushed. Oh, will you really take me?"

She was sobbing now for pure joy. He chafed the cold hands that trembled so in his warm, strong touch, he laid his rough cheek against her throbbing brow, and it seemed to still the tumult in her brain.

"Oh when will you take me?" she cried eagerly.

"To-morrow, perhaps, or next day. And then you will be cared for and cuddled and made much of, for my sister is an angel. And I shall do the scolding when I am roused, for I have the temper of a fiend."

Dell gave a weak, amused little laugh.

"What would rouse you?" she asked. "I ought to be warned before I am decoyed into your den."

"Oh, you are not so near dead as I thought!" and the doctor's eyes twinkled. "Your not getting well might, when I have taken so much pains with you. Your running away would, of a surety. I am under bonds for your safe keeping."

"I shall never run away again," and her voice came through tears. "I shouldn't have the courage. And I promised papa Murray."

"Well, if he can trust to your promise I think it will be safe for me. And now, have you chirked up enough to see Miss Neale? For I must go, but she is to stay to dinner."

"And I look so dreadfully ——" But the doctor had gone to summon her.

Dell always remembered the soft, harmonious woman, who seemed almost to float into the room, clad in tender lavender grey, with a cloud of fine illusion around her neck. She was tall and rather thin, but oh, how beautiful she looked to Dell, as the eyes of shady violet blue studied hers, and the sympathetic hand took the one so limp and thin. The voice had a suggestiveness of music.

"This is Miss Neale," announced the doctor. "And you are to be the best of friends."

"Oh!" and Dell gave a long, long sigh. It seemed to her that she was glad she had come to Sherburne House just for the chance of meeting Miss Neale.

"You poor little girl! You see the doctor wants you under his eyes for awhile, so he can keep you up to the mark. You think you will not get homesick?"

"I couldn't be homesick—with you," Dell said frankly, smiling up in the sweet face.

The doctor had to rush away. Miss Neale sat beside Dell and stroked her hand, talking in the low, soft tone that was so tranquillizing. Dell's heart throbbed with a glad bound.

The dinner bell rang, and Miss Neale kissed her softly. She remained in a blissful dream. Was it true? What magic had been used? Were they really alarmed about her?

When Cassy came up with her dinner she was strangely startled. At first it seemed as if Dell was dead, so white and wan did she look. Her head had dropped a little, but she was only asleep. Delight had proved an excellent sedative.

As Cassy stood there, a fervent pity crept into her heart for the child. Had she been fairly treated? Surely she had not thrust herself among the Sherburnes! She had not wanted to come. Perhaps it was this utter lack of appreciation of her position that had been such a thorn in Miss Sherburne's side. Her continued regard for the Murrays—for though she might be forbidden to mention them in health, all the passionate fondness of her nature had overswept the bounds in her delirium. She had begged for kisses with such piteous entreaty. "Take me in your arms, Mamma Murray, I am so tired!" had been her beseeching cry. And Lizzy's tenderness had soothed her in her wildest moments.

Surely Miss Sherburne loved her Beaumanoir nieces and nephews, and the twins were great favorites with her. Florence sat upon her lap, and put her dimpled hands up to her auntie's chin caressingly. It was not because she was incapable of love, or that the springs of affection had been dried up by the hand of passing years. Had Dell unwittingly hit the truth when she said they all hated her? Perhaps she would have been gentler, had the others been really kind.

She roused then, and half smiled up in Cassy's sympathetic face, almost completing a victory.

"Can't you eat a little dinner, Miss Dell?" she asked persuasively.

"No, Cassy. Or I might eat just one peach. I am sleepy and want to lie down. Who was here! O Cassy, the doctor's sister! What a lovely face she has! And her voice takes you to heaven's very gate. I wish—if I had only been related to *them*! After all, I don't believe I care very much for Sherburne House."

She had risen while she was saying this, and Cassy steadied her steps as she walked over to the bed. She was tired and sleepy, she had passed such a restless night.

Certainly Dell's fortune had been taken at the flood.

Miss Sherburne had gone around in her little circle until, on every side, the wall seemed higher and more unyielding. She had morbidly magnified her office, and her rigid faith in her own opinions had been gaining ground under isolating influences.

But these more modern women, while they might be less conscientious, had a broader outlook. They protested bitterly, and then accepted the inevitable. There was no real reason after all why their lives should be made a burthen for a wayward, obstinate, ill-bred girl. Do the best they could with her, the easiest for themselves, and their duty was done. So it happened that Mrs. Lepage hailed the doctor's offer with gratification.

"Let her go, of course, Aunt Aurelia. Miss Neale is in her element when she has a broken-legged chicken, or a sick little darky to befriend. And she does need change of air. You know we brought the twins down here as soon as they could be moved after they had the scarlet fever. A peevish invalid destroys the comfort of a whole house, and there will be guests coming and going, and we want our time for enjoyment. Send her, by all means."

Mrs. Beaumanoir took the same view. "You have really worn yourself out over the child," she said. "You need rest and diversion quite as much as she does. Aunt Aurelia, you are ultra-conscientious. The child cannot exceed her own capabilities, do what you will. It is too late to make her over into a Sherburne. If we *could* have had her four years ago! But there is no use of bemoaning fate."

"She will be ruined at the doctor's. She needs the tightest rein. When she comes back, no one will be able to do anything with her."

"Then pack her off to a good, strict school. If she is stolid and unamiable you can never transform her into an angel. And now that Edith is here, you will have no

end of guests. You would not enjoy yourself a moment. Besides, I do not think Doctor Carew over-indulgent to unreasonable, hysterical people. And on the score of looks, she ought to be hidden away somewhere. She is a perfect fright ! ”

“ If I thought it really for the best —— ”

“ Think so at once, then,” and Mrs. Beaumanoir smiled. “ My dear Aunt Aurelia, you are morbidly conscientious. You must come back to a more reasonable frame of mind. We will all help you. And I am extremely anxious to know how you came to suspect she took the money from you.”

Miss Sherburne colored distressfully, and admitted with some hesitation that there was no other way for her to get it. She had even inquired by letter if Miss Hendricks had given her any, and had been answered with a very positive denial.

Yet Mrs. Beaumanoir was surprised at her keeping to her first suspicion on such slight grounds. From her early girlhood Miss Aurelia’s business methods had been the admiration of the family. When she took charge of the household she accounted for every penny and made others do the same. Yet she was not niggardly. The open-handed hospitality of the house was a proverb throughout the county. But she exacted a rigorous honesty of the house servants. They were warned when they came in, and the first dereliction banned them forever. They knew appeal would be useless. Still she was extremely careful of putting temptation in their way. While doors stood generously open, valuables were kept under lock and key. It was impossible that a woman of Miss Sherburne’s methodical habits could have lost any considerable sum without knowing it ; neither could it have been abstracted, and not missed. Mrs. Beaumanoir truly regretted that Miss Sherburne had made the hasty accusation.

"Still I should find some means of compelling her to tell where she really *did* get it," said Mrs. Beaumanoir decisively. "When she is stronger the matter must be properly sifted. And she must learn that your authority is to be respected. Of course she has had no real training, hitherto."

So the way was paved for the doctor and Miss Carew. The ladies had always been friends, though of late years their tastes and beliefs had somewhat diverged. Long before the war freed the slaves, Miss Carew's interest in them had been so outspoken, although not aggressive, that many of her friends classed her with the Northern radicals. The Sherburnes had always believed in an inferior race. As Royalists, two hundred years ago, they would have believed in the divine right of kings.

Miss Sherburne felt herself overruled by circumstances, and her nerves were hardly in the state for obstinate resistance. She acquiesced, but there was an internal revolt. She felt as if she was losing supreme authority over this child, that, somehow, belonged to her, inasmuch as she was Edward Sherburne's child. If she could have opened Dell's veins and let out all her mother's blood!

Miss Carew came up afterward to say good-bye, as she was going over to the Beaumanoirs for a call. Dell was asleep. How worn the face looked; yet it held in its thin lines and sharpened contour a promise of a large, generous soul, if not so much absolute beauty. She pressed her lips to the forehead. Dell smiled, but did not wake.

"The doctor will come over for her to-morrow," Miss Carew said with her good-bye.

"The child hasn't a thing to wear but the dressing-gown Cassy made her last week. It seems to me she is inches taller, and so thin that her dresses, even the one or two that might answer, will hang on her. Really, she is in no condition to go anywhere!"

Miss Sherburne gave a tired, fretful sigh.

"A couple of flannel gowns will do her at present. White is as good as anything. Or stop—I have some blue—Cassy can go at that. Then you can send to the city for a few changes; I dare say she will soon get stout again. It is not wisdom to have too many things for growing girls."

Mrs. Lepage hunted up the flannel and Cassy went to work. There were visitors, but Dell was not disturbed. She lay in the bed supremely happy and content. It was as if she had gone into a new country.

"If only it doesn't rain to-morrow," she said to Cassy.

And it did not. Dell almost sprang out of bed, she was so joyous.

"I hope you will not make any trouble," Miss Sherburne remarked as she was looking up a few articles of clothing. "I do not feel safe about your going with no one to look after you, but I really cannot spare Cassy. And she will be busy altering your dresses. Your winter wardrobe must be considered. And there are so many things."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HOUSE BEAUTIFUL.

THERE was only one thing for Dell. Her heart was as light as a bird. She sat still, although she longed to get up and dance around the room. She hardly heard the voice that yesterday rasped every nerve ; that would now, only the birds of hope were caroling in her brain. She would say no word to offend Miss Sherburne, so she kept silent, and offended her bitterly.

Not a hint of the charges made upon her return had been broached between them. It certainly *was* Dell's place to proffer a confession. How to extort a word from one so obstinately bent on silence was beyond her capabilities, unless she had plunged into a sea of danger. She did not dare rouse the sleeping lion and make a scene just now.

But she noted Dell's joy with a curious sense of dismay. Her eyes were radiant, her lips were falling into half smiles, then suddenly brought to a desperate primness. Surely the child owed *her* love and gratitude for rescuing her from those wretched surroundings, and again the motley crew under the apple-tree rose before her. She had not sought to cultivate Dell's affection, she had not cared ; but after all, it was a plain duty on the child's part, and she resented the lack of it. These other people, to whom she owed no gratitude, would win her preference—tenderness—love, perhaps.

The doctor's carriage came winding around the path. Miss Sherburne went down. Cassy brushed Dell's hair and put on the blue gown, which made her look ghostly.

"Oh!" she exclaimed with a tearful sigh; "I *am* horrid! I am glad to be buried out of sight."

"But your hair is coming in, and it will soon curl all over your head. And I think you will be quite slim, Miss Dell. You certainly have grown tall."

Dell gave her a grateful little squeeze. Then a sudden gravity overspread her face. "Cassy," she began hesitatingly, "I wish you would do something for me. Can you make some inquiries—quietly—and see if any one lost some money—the last of August, maybe. What the sum was, and what the bills were, and all the particulars. For I can't think it was Miss Sherburne's. And I want the rightful owner to have it. Do, please. I shall be so grateful to you."

"Yes, Miss Dell, I certainly will."

The doctor came in with a merry greeting. He bundled her up in a shawl and carried her downstairs, across the porch to the carriage—he had taken Miss Neale's phaeton to-day. Dell caught a glimpse of the two graceful girls, Ethel and Alice playing croquet on the lawn. Mrs. Lepage sat in a large wicker chair on the veranda with some fancy work in her hand and Florence dancing about like a beautiful cherub. Miss Sherburne looked stiff and resentful, and Dell felt the unexpressed reluctance. The doctor tucked her in and promised to report the next day.

"Good-bye," they all said. "Good-bye," she returned. A great wave of satisfaction thrilled through every nerve.

"You are worlds better this morning," and the doctor smiled down into the pallid face.

"I am glad to get out of prison."

"I have heard of people who stepped out of the frying pan into the fire."

"But one may get tired of continual sizzling."

"Fire is purifying—it burns up the waste matter," and the doctor gave her a shrewd, laughing glance.

"And I am not sure but I have gone a good deal to waste latterly," she said rather demurely.

"Well, you had the fire of the fever. And it burned pretty fiercely, let me tell you. There were several days when I almost doubted my ability to put out the flame."

"Was it really so bad as that?"

"It was pretty bad, and now I expect you to give me some credit in getting well."

"I shall try. Oh, I know I shall get well now," and a soft light shone in her eyes.

But she was very tired presently. The doctor placed his strong arm about her and inclined her head down on his broad shoulder. The soft air and the motion of the carriage soon made her sleepy. Long before they reached Ardmore she had forgotten everything. Indeed, she did not rouse until the sudden cessation of the motion startled her into consciousness.

Doctor Carew sprang out, then taking the bundle in his arms carried her through and deposited her on the old sofa.

"Here is a mummy for you, Neale," he cried gayly. "I've invaded the pyramid and carried her off. Whether she knows the secret buried with the corner stone remains to be seen. I warn you that Miss Neale is a bit uncanny. She has a way of getting down to the bottom of your thoughts that is quite alarming. You had better hand your secrets over to me."

Dell smiled. "I have only one," she said, "and should like to hand that over to somebody."

"Well, we will not trouble about it just yet, so long as it doesn't disturb your sleep. Now I must leave you to the tender mercies of my sister, for I have already wasted a good deal of time upon you. Good-bye, and allow yourself to be made comfortable."

Miss Neale took off her wrappings, arranged the pillows under her head, and then busied herself about her

usual duties. Dell was wide-awake now and watched her with a languid but pleasant interest. She was so different from Miss Sherburne. Just about as tall, a trifle stouter, but rounded, pliant, harmonious. There was nothing about her that bristled up. You knew at once you were not likely to stroke her the wrong way, while with Miss Sherburne no way seemed right. The room too, was so restful. It had not the utterly cleared up look of Sherburne House; and the big table almost groaned under its load of books and papers. But there was space for one splendid autumnal bouquet, wood asters of nearly every shade. The long rays of sunshine almost put out the fire that smouldered sleepily on the hearth.

"Oh, it is all so nice!" Dell exclaimed with a long, happy sigh. "It *feels* like home. I used to think there could be no place like Mamma Murray's—" then Dell caught Miss Neale's gown as she was passing, and the soft eyes smiled down into hers, the arms enclosed her caressingly.

"You are so sweet!" and the lonely girl was crying on Miss Neale's shoulder.

The doctor bounced into the room, amazed.

"Hi! hi!" he cried. "I thought the sun shone!"

"Can't I have a shower, just a pure joy shower," said Dell with spirit. "It's so long since I cried for joy. And when it rains in the sunshine you can find a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. Mamma Murray said they told her so, when she was a little girl."

"No one ever went after it but wild geese. As if they wanted money!" flung out the doctor disdainfully. "Neale, where is that last review?"

Miss Carew put her hand on it at once.

"Thank you." Then he went over and took a look at Dell. Something in the large wistful eyes moved him immeasurably, and stooping over he kissed her.

"There, be a good girl," he said in a tone of assumed gayety. "Don't make Miss Neale's life a burthen."

All the remainder of the day they had to themselves. Dell sat up by the window and looked out over a new landscape, she had naps innumerable. Miss Carew was in and out, and during the afternoon read her Jean Ingelow's "Songs of Seven."

"Oh," cried Dell in a tremble of joy; "how beautiful it is. And I thought I did not like verses, only some little songs Mamma Murray used to sing. Why, you can fairly smell the clover, and see the dazzle of butterflies!"

Certainly the face was not irremediably plain in that glow of enthusiasm.

They had a pretty tea together. Sheba, a grave, middle-aged woman who looked like an Egyptian princess, Dell declared, waited upon them with all the perfection of Sherburne House. Dell felt so at home. It seemed now as if she had known Miss Neale forever, and spent weeks in this room.

It was quite dark when the doctor came in.

"Hallo!" he cried gayly. "Are you homesick and waiting for me to take you back to Sherburne House?"

"Do not recall it to mind!" Dell implored.

The doctor sat down beside her, felt her pulse, gave her ear a little pinch and asked her some questions.

"You are certainly none the worse," he said. "But your day has been quite long enough and you must be transported to your downy couch. Isn't that rather neat for an old fellow like me? You haven't an idea of the nice things I can say."

"I suppose she ought to go to bed," said Miss Carew.

"Yes. I'll carry her up while she is such a light weight. It will not do for me to strain my constitution when she begins to gain in flesh."

"Oh, I do not want to. I'd rather be thin," returned Dell, with such anxiety that the doctor laughed.

"You look now as if the crows had made a meal of you and expected to come back and finish the bones. Neale, it will be hardly safe to leave windows open. Well, will you trust me to carry you up?"

She was borne triumphantly. "Oh," with a soft little ripple of merriment, "how strong you are! It is almost—like papa Murray."

"Come! I warn you I shall be furiously jealous! I can stand Mamma Murray, but to know I have a rival in the grand art of carrying you up and downstairs is too much. There, I turn you over to Miss Neale and leave you to repent of your heinous ingratitude."

Miss Neale had arranged a cot in her room, so that Dell would not feel lonely. She disrobed her with such soft, lingering touches that each one was like a caress.

"You are so good to me," Dell said with a little sob just under her breath, as she kissed her.

"Shall I send up some one to sit with you?"

"Oh no. I feel as if I were in fairyland. And I do not want to be a trouble to you."

"Do not think of such a thing, my dear child."

Miss Neale went out to the dining-room to give the doctor his supper. He was hungry and for some moments ate in silence. Then he said interrogatively—"Well?"

"She will be no trouble at all, Randolph, and she is so grateful, so frank and honest. I think Miss Sherburne has begun mistakenly, and I do not believe she will be so very plain. She has lovely eyes, and her nose is straight, with a sort of decided character. Children change so much. But she does not favor the Sherburnes at present."

"She'll never be pretty, but she may be extremely fine-looking. It is strange how we are always protest-

ing against beauty, and how it rules us. The Sherburnes are all a good-looking lot, and for this child to be positively ugly, would be a sort of deformity inherited from her mother. And I shall set about making her handsome. I always had a weakness for pretty women."

Miss Neale laughed.

"Whittingham is coming over on Sunday to dine. He enjoyed the *coup* immensely. But she would have been months getting well there. Her nerves have had too much strain. And the idea of taking up lessons in a week or two! What in nature does possess people!"

"Thunder!" he would have said if he had been out of doors, but he had a tender regard for Miss Neale's feelings. "She raced over miles of Latin and acres of French verbs, while she was careering in the bed, wilder than a hawk. Doubtless she was pushed to the utmost there in New York, then to be pinned to books all the hot summer—talk of cruelty to animals, slaves—this is Herodian murder of the innocents, of brain and nerve tissue. Lucky that she came through it at all. And Miss Sherburne is just that sort of twisted up, morbidly conscientious being, that the child's death would have been a thorn in her soul to prick her all her days."

"Yes, I think she meant to do her whole duty."

"Your good people are always making a scapegoat of Duty. You see the old Jews were wiser. They bundled their sins on him and let him go out in the wilderness, to shake them off maybe, but we keep him under our very eyes and stumble over him to wound and bruise ourselves. We are willing to do our duty but it must be done within the lines of our own red tape. Where's the dessert? I can't be defrauded of a single right."

Miss Neale touched the bell.

Afterward they went back to the home-room, and settled themselves. Miss Neale took up a lapfull of some white stuff that had a bit of rose color here and there.

"What in the name of wonder are you concocting there? It looks good enough to eat in milk."

"Rubbish;" and she laughed. "You must not be so curious."

He nodded in an odd, humorous manner.

Dell slept delightfully. When she woke, the room was in a flood of sunshine, the screen beside her keeping it out of her eyes. She felt so bright and well that she almost bounded out of bed. But a great tremble warned her. It was so queer to be weak and helpless in body when one felt so buoyant of heart.

She did not have to wait long, however. Sheba, a religious mother had been charmed with the high-sounding name of Bathsheba, but it was so long ago she had almost forgotten the first part herself—looked in at the door.

"Miss Neale sent me to see if you were wakin' up. Ther's no hurry, Missy."

"But I would like to get up," said Dell, "if it is convenient."

"Yes, any time. Miss Neale busy out in de kitchen, an' if Missy doan mind I'll dress her."

Missy assented. Sheba's fingers were not quite as deft as Cassy's, but they did very well. Then she carried her down to the home-room.

"Where is the doctor?" Dell asked.

"Called out airly dis mornin', Missy—not mor'n four o'clock. Doctors lib on a kinder jump en' never know how long dey'll be 'lowed in one place."

Miss Neale entered with a smile and kindly greeting. Her hair was a pretty mass of waves, and over her soft grey dress she wore a large white apron with a bib, that somehow made her look like a great girl.

"I wonder if I am making you too much trouble?" said Dell a little anxiously.

"You are not to think of that. The doctor wishes you

to have all the sleep you can get. And now Sheba shall bring you in some breakfast. Saturday is a sort of housekeeping day with me, in which I make up the week's shortcomings. How bright you look."

"I should feel altogether well if it wasn't for a queer shakiness when I make an effort. I never was ill before."

"You are weak after all the strain. And the doctor said if you were not tired from yesterday's journey, I could take you out in my phaeton for half an hour."

"Oh, how delightful!" Her eyes were humid.

Miss Neale brought some crocheting and sat opposite while she ate her breakfast. Everything tasted so good. There were some luscious late peaches, and magnificent grapes.

Dell read a little. She was still bewitched with "Songs of Seven." It left such a lovely rythmical refrain floating in the very atmosphere. And one verse seemed written for her:

I wait for my story—the birds cannot sing it,
Not one as he sits on the tree;
The bells cannot ring it, but long years, oh, bring it!
Such as I wish it to be!

Ah, what did she wish it to be? To go back to the Murrays? Did it savor of ingratitude not to long to return to them as she had before? If she could stay here, but Ardmore was not so far from Sherburne House, and as the years went on she might be allowed some choice of friends. Surely she had made a staunch one in the doctor.

The ride in the phaeton was delightful. Miss Neale had a pretty iron-grey pony, round and sleek, with a beautiful long mane and tail, and so gentle that Miss Neale said if Dell were a little stronger she might take a lesson in driving.

The doctor lived quite at one end of the town. Out beyond there were numerous plantations in various stages of neglect, their owners dead or gone away. Now and then one showed evidence of thrift. There were some small negro colonies, but they were not as orderly as the quarters at Sherburne House.

"Miss Sherburne is a very uncommon manager," said Miss Carew. "Then too, soon after the war ended, the coal and iron mines were worked and there was money enough to keep Sherburne House properly. Your great-grandfather had the wisdom to see that slavery was ceasing to be profitable even in his day, and that its only chance was in the far South. So your own grandfather was educated with broader ideas, and accepted the change more readily. Still, all the family owe much to Miss Aurelia."

Was she in any way indebted to her, Dell wondered. Somehow she almost wished Miss Sherburne would not evince so much anxiety. There would be money enough in any event.

The air was so still that every branch was outlined against the smoky red sky. And oh, what a rich fragrance freighted the air! It was good to be alive, and Dell said so in her eager, fervent fashion. Surely, she was not a dull or indifferent child. All things seemed to touch her keenly.

But she was pretty tired when 'Rius, short for Darius, the old factotum who honestly believed the doctor, house and all would go to ruin without him, lifted her out and carried her into the house. She had a good nap on the old sofa before dinner. Miss Neale had been busy sewing over in her corner.

It was mid-afternoon before the doctor came in, declaring he was tired to death. He had been everywhere, even over to Sherburne House to report, and on Monday the young ladies were all to drive in to see

for themselves how Dell progressed. He had some dinner and shut himself up in his office to take a nap. The bright day had clouded over and the wind rustled and sighed through the pines with a shivering metallic sound. By dark there was a gentle pattering rain.

But Sunday morning was lovely again, not sunshiny but soft, and with no threatening clouds, the air pervaded by a moist autumnal fragrance.

"You will not mind my going to church," Miss Neale said. "I promised to take old Miss Floyd, and it is quite a long drive, so I have to start early. And the doctor was called out. I was to tell you that Mr. Whittingham was to be here to dine, will you mind seeing him?"

"Oh no, I shall like to."

Miss Carew kissed her tenderly. "Dinah will attend to you this morning," she said. "Every other Sunday Sheba goes to visit her granddaughter, who is living at some distance. But Dinah is very nice."

There was a cheerful fire blazing on the hearth. Dinah came in with her arms full of various articles. She was quite different from Sheba, more indeed like their own Dinah, with her superabundance of flesh, her black, shiny skin and soft large eyes. A gay turban was wound around her head, but below its edge peeped a few crinkly braided tails, while Sheba's hair seemed to have some Indian admixture in it. Her hands were plump and soft as cushions. Then she had a caressing mammy-like way, so natural to many of the elder Southern negroes. She bathed Dell, put on her stockings and slippers, and brushed her hair with an almost magnetic touch.

"Pity 'bout yeh ha'r," she said with her broad, soft accent. "But mos' allus does come out'n fever. An' yeh bin monst'ous sick. I hear Mas'r Doctor talkin' 'bout it. But'll grow out."

"I hope it will not be red," said Dell anxiously. "When I came from England with my own mamma, I had long golden curls. They were such a trouble I wanted them cut off. Then it all grew queer and streaky and was a great mop. They cut it when I was ill, but it has nearly all fallen out," she ended ruefully.

"Well, de new is jes' like soft cat ha'r, on'y it's tryin' to curl. An' 'twon't be red, 'cause you've got such dark eyebrows an' long, glisteny lashes. An' w'en yeh git some fat on yeh bones it all be right, Missy. An' here's yeh nice new gown Miss Neale she mek fur yeh."

"Oh!" It was just a cry of delight.

A soft, thick, creamy flannel, not very fine in texture, but with a long nap that seemed almost like fur. There was a band of light grey canton flannel around the bottom, and a wide sailor collar and cuffs. Down the front were small rose-colored bows with a ribbon to tie at the neck, another at the waist.

"Oh, how beautiful! And to make it for me! There never was anybody so sweet and good. For you see I wasn't even a friend or acquaintance, and she has only known me such a little while."

Dell laid her cheek caressingly on the soft flannel.

"She's jes' de Lawd's own, honey. She's allus mekin' de waste places sing an' de wild'ness rejoice."

"Oh, why wasn't she married!" cried Dell, remembering all that she and Con had said about old maids, and positively hating to have her classed in the same category as Miss Sherburne. Why, she was as sweet as Mamma Murray, and she ought to have children of her own climbing her knees.

"Well, dat's a myst'ry, shuah. 'Tain't for want o' no chances! An' she ain't no ol' maid," rather resentfully.

"She's muddled more chillen, jes' as de Bible says, dan she dat has a husbin, 'n' if dey all rise up an' call her blessed at de las' day, black 'n' white 'n' all colors, golly, won't dere be a percesshun! De Lawd he won't be askin' pertikelars, 'cause dey'll all be shouten' how she done fed 'em an' put cloze on 'em an' good tings in dere poor empty stomachs, an' bin' up dere broken hearts an' dere woun's, an' go fix up de dead and have 'em buried decent. An' she doan' go by on de odder side like dat proud ol' Phar'see."

Dell was flicking away the tears with her thin fingers. Yes, there were generous people in the world, Mamma Murray, who gave her so much love and care, and now Miss Neale.

"Doan' cry, chile. It's jes' pure 'joicin' natur'. Dough I spec ol' Mis' at Sherburne ain't jes' dat kind. Dey's mighty nice folks, dem Sherburnes, 'stocratic an' all dat, but dey doan' hold a candle to Miss Neale. My ol' mammy wuz one ob de Sherburne slaves long time ago, 'n' sold Souf. I grow up in Georgy 'n' my two brudders, Jake an' Effrum. An' when de war come an' we's all git free, I 'member my ol' mammy dead an' gone sayin', Dinah, yeh git back to ol' Ferginny ef ebber yeh kin. Ain't no sech odder cōuntry on God's yearth as ol' Ferginny."

"But you did not go to Sherburne?" said Dell, her bright eyes betraying her interest.

"No. Yeh see tings all changed; and de doctor he wantin' somebody. Den I hear ol' Miss kinder straight an' stiff an' sharp like, an' mebbe wouldn't want me, nor 'member my ol' mammy. An' de Lawd he jes' d'rected my steps right into Miss Neale's sunshine. An' honey, I spec Heabben gone ter be jes' full o' sech folks."

"But what is to be done with the other real good people who are not pleasant to live with?" asked Dell much puzzled. "They are not wicked."

"Dunno, chile. Dar's San Paul, yeh know, talk 'bout tree heabbens, an' he say he seen tings yeh not 'lowed to talk 'bout. I spec dat de fust-class heabben, 'cause dere's sight o' talkin' 'bout todder one and eberybody 'spectin' to git dar. But sech clear white people as Miss Neale, dat hab de glory of God shinin' tru all ober, go straight up dere to dat highest place. An' mebbe dere's try a little more. An' now I mus' carry you down to yeh breakfas'."

"Oh, I am sure I can walk."

"No, Mas'r Doctor he say you doan' walk up and down. Mebbe yeh get dizzy and tumble."

Dinah picked her up in her strong arms and carried her with the utmost ease. Then she brought in her breakfast.

"I am sure I never was so hungry in all my life."

Dinah laughed with a rich mellowness.

How lovely the room looked. There was a great jar full of autumnal branches, maple, oak with acorns, wild plum with some purple fruit; bowls of flowers set around. There was no especial Sunday look, yet as she studied the sunshine and the peace, a verse of the Psalms came to her.

This is the day the Lord hath made,
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Every day was his work, every morning a new resurrection. There was the greater festival when the Lord arose, the Sunday laying aside of worldly things, the Lord's day. Why did it seem so much more devotional here? And why was not everybody trying to make some one happy, like Miss Neale? Had *she* ever really tried? She had been good and pleasant, in a happy, thoughtless way, when all was in harmony around her. Did Miss Neale do her good work only when everything was pleasant and satisfactory?

She finished her breakfast and wandered about the room, inhaling the sweet odors and studying the home-like arrangements. Sherburne House seemed cold and stiff. In a vague way she felt that it lacked the real heartiness of love. Perhaps before she came it might have been different, and she sighed.

She drifted around to Miss Neale's corner, and picked up her prayer-book. How many long psalms she had studied during the summer! It opened of itself and she glanced at a verse.

"Praise the Lord for it is a good thing to sing praises unto the Lord: yea, a joyful and a pleasant thing it is to be thankful."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TOUCH THAT MAKES THE WORLD AKIN.

SOME one entered the room and Lyndell started, turned partly around, and smiled.

"Well! well!" cried the doctor. "Are you posing for statuary? Lucky about that pink ribbon under your chin, or one wouldn't be able to tell where the girl ended and the gown began."

"Don't you like it?" asked Dell eagerly, yet with a touch of something between resentment and anxiety. "It is a Sunday morning gift from my dear Miss Neale, and I think it so lovely."

"I like white gowns. And this is pretty, but it makes you look like a young lady. I am fond of girls, real girls. I used to think I'd give everything I had, if my cub was only a girl, but I'm quite content now."

"Your—cub!" cried Dell, in amazement.

"Yes." There was a spice of amusement in the doctor's face. "You didn't dream that I had a son up in New York at Columbia College?"

"Why, no; how could I?"

"To be sure. Miss Neale mothered him until she had him quite spoiled. And now she will spoil you."

"But it is just lovely to be spoiled"—and Dell's eyes filled with a tender light.

"Why doesn't some one take a hand in spoiling me?" the doctor asked, in a whimsical tone. "Well, how do you feel—long and thin?"

"Yes, I do," said Dell, laughing. "It seems to me I

grow about an inch every night. And I should like to stay a girl. I don't want to turn into a young lady. And I am almost well. If I had a little more strength I should want to run and shout for very delight."

"Then you do know how to run?" The doctor elevated his brows rather incredulously.

"Run!" cried Dell, with superb disdain. "I should think I did! Why, there wasn't a boy about Murray's Row that could beat me! Or jumping either, right along, the best three out of five. But I suppose it wasn't ladylike," she added ruefully.

"It goes to make a good animal, and keeps the nerves from getting too fine and threadbare. You haven't done much running here?"

"Miss Sherburne thinks it dreadfully rude and rough. I ran with Ned Beaumanoir, and she was—offended," said Dell, rather softly. "But the week she was away Miss Hendricks allowed me to, and we had some splendid walks."

"Ned is a Miss Nancy! But he will be packed off to school presently, which will prove his salvation. You drove out every day?"

"No-o—" the child answered slowly; "I'm afraid I wasn't very good. There were extra tasks when I was in disgrace, and I had to stay in my own room."

"You had your regular meals?" was the sharp inquiry, which made her flush.

"I had some bread and a glass of milk. Oh, I thought at first I should be starved! You see I had been used to eating all I wanted. Mamma Murray never found any fault. After awhile I got over feeling so hungry. And when I was in New York I did not want nearly so much."

"What did you do that was so dreadfully bad?"

Dell colored faintly.

"You see it was all so different," she answered, with

a rather perplexed air. "I did not mean to be saucy or rude—at least—" hesitatingly.

"What did Mamma Murray do when you were all bad together?" he asked, raising his brows.

Dell opened her eyes wide and stared at the doctor. Just now they had the limpidness of beautiful brown quartz.

"It doesn't seem to me that we were ever very bad. I am afraid I can't make you understand," and she drew her brows together thoughtfully, "but we were busy and merry, we helped each other and took care of the babies, and played and had no end of fun. And when we did anything real wrong we were always sorry and wanted to make it all right and straight. We gave up something that would have pleased us very much, but no one *took* it away. Oh, dear, how many tangles there are when you go to new places. And, troubles——"

"Well, they'll keep over until Monday. It's a good plan to bury them in a pit as the farmers do their winter vegetables. The sound, well-grown ones will come out plump and fresh, but the little ones shrivel and shrink up, so you give them a toss and that is the last of them. And some troubles that look very large, if stowed away out of sight, would shrink to nothing."

Dell smiled rather faintly. "I'm afraid mine will be the plump ones," she said. "And I'd like to ask you"—she paused thoughtfully.

"You shall ask me all the questions that you can't answer for yourself. But not this morning. Let them go now for awhile. Did Miss Neale tell you Mr. Whittingham was coming over to dinner? And you must be calm and serene."

"So that he may see me in a new phase? He has seen me in so many different ones. I am like the chameleon; it wouldn't be safe to venture a prediction as to what I shall be."

The doctor laughed.

"Oh," cried Dell, "he is coming now."

Sure enough his well-groomed horse came trotting along. The doctor went out to receive his guest, and presently ushered him into the room. Mr. Whittingham started at the first glimpse of Dell.

"Why, I should not have known you," he exclaimed, in the utmost surprise.

"I am thin and bald and, may be, old," said Dell, rather ruefully. "It seems a hundred years since I went to New York."

"And you look so utterly unlike the girl we captured last June that I can hardly believe my senses. How tall you are"—and he eyed her from head to foot.

"There never will be any Dell Murray again," she said a little sadly, as if she hated to lose the old personality.

"But we mean to hold fast to Dell Sherburne," responded the doctor quickly. "I'll brew a hair tonic warranted to turn your hair white in a single night, and find some wonderful preparation for adipose tissue."

"But I don't want to get disgracefully fat, as I was before," interrupted Dell. "None of the Sherburnes are fat."

"Hoity, toity!" cried the doctor. "What do you say to Mrs. Beaumanoir? And Mrs. Stanwood is a regular dumpling."

"Oh!" Dell drew a relieved breath. "But all the girls are slim, and I felt almost as if I was an elephant," she said protestingly.

"But an elephant always takes his trunk when he travels, and you do not. Try for a better simile."

Miss Neale's phaeton wheeled around the corner, and she nodded to them through the window. In a few moments she joined the group, and graciously apologized for being a little late. Dinah had the dinner ready to

serve, and Dell was allowed to go out on the doctor's arm. There was an agreeable quartet, and Dell was roused to her olden gayety by the bits of frank, quaint humor. Mr. Whittingham was something like Miss Neale, she thought, only the fastidiousness seemed more pronounced. But both were so delicate and refined, while the doctor's breadth of shoulder, strong arms and hands, and vigor written in every line of his weather-beaten face pleased her by the striking contrast. He wore a full beard, rather on the warm chestnut tint—not so very unlike her hair, when she had any. His eyes were a cordial, merry blue, but a touch of emotion turned them sympathetic, although even then they might laugh at you a little.

Dell's wits had been sharpened by contact with the Murrys, and feeling under no restraint, she was her own joyous, childlike self. She surprised both gentlemen by her bright sallies. It seemed to her that she had never been so really happy!

The doctor and his guest went to the office for an after-dinner smoke.

"Now you must lie down on the sofa and take a good rest," said Miss Neale, as they entered the home-room.

Dell reached up and put her arms around Miss Carew's neck, surprised at her own tallness.

"I must thank you for my pretty gown. Dinah said you made it for me. But oh, what words will express my delight! It is so soft and lovely and comfortable."

"And you do not look so much like a sick girl in it. The dark blue is very trying at present, but you will find it serviceable. I am fond of greys, though they are rather old, unless very much brightened up. But white is becoming for any stage of youth."

"You are so—so kindly. People are sometimes good without being truly kind. I'd like to call you by a name

I found in a book I read not long ago. It would just suit you"—and the girl glanced up wistfully.

"Well"—with an inquiring smile.

"Heart's Delight."

"Captain Cuttle," said Miss Neale. Then she bent and kissed her.

"Was your old lady glad to go out this morning? It was so delightful."

"Yes, very." Miss Carew was pleased by the inquiry. "She suffers a good deal with the rheumatism, and it is only now and then she feels well enough to venture out. Her own daughter is dead, and she lives with a married granddaughter. Since the war they have been in straitened circumstances, and her home is not the most enjoyable. During her earlier years she had a great deal that was refined and delightful."

"Now and then she comes to the House Beautiful," said Dell, glancing up. "And I know just how she feels."

Miss Carew smiled as she arranged Dell's pillows.

"Presently I am going to have my Sunday-school class," she said. "The little negro children around come in and say a lesson, and I read them a story. There is no Mission School very near. You have a very good one at Sherburne."

"I have never been there. I——" Then Dell paused.

"I suppose Miss Sherburne considers you too young to take an interest in it. Well, all that will come by and by, when you are older."

She read to Dell awhile, then there was a shuffling of feet on the side porch, and with a kiss she left her. Dell was not sleepy; so she lay wondering if she could fashion her own life something on this method, as she grew to womanhood. Or would Miss Sherburne be mistress as long as she lived?

Mr. Whittingham entered. She raised her head, and motioned him to the vacant chair beside her.

"The doctor has been called out suddenly," he announced apologetically. "And—shall I disturb you?"

"No," replied Dell. "And I am very glad to see you alone. There is something I ought to say——" She colored and hesitated.

"I came out to Sherburne the day after I brought you home. I hoped to make matters a little smoother, but I am afraid I failed." How could he tell her of Miss Sherburne's accusation? Yet he felt that she ought to be given an opportunity to explain.

She held out her thin, white hand. He remembered how dimpled it had been not very long ago.

"My dear child"—and a tender expression settled about his lips, as if inviting her to confidence.

"I am afraid I made trouble for you," she said, with a sort of beseeching regret. "I ought to have told you about the money. Wasn't it odd that I never mentioned it in my delirium?"

"Did you not?" wonderingly.

"No. And I want to tell you just how and where I found it," she exclaimed eagerly.

Certainly it was a very simple little incident. She told it so straightforwardly that he could not doubt her truth.

"Did you never imagine it might belong to Miss Sherburne?" he inquired gently.

"I did not consider about its really belonging to any one when no inquiries were made. And I know, now, that Miss Sherburne did not *lose* it, for she accused me of going to her desk and taking it in small sums." Dell's face crimsoned, and her voice had a tremble of suppressed anger in it. "You see, if she had lost fifteen dollars at one time she would have known it and given notice. And it was dreadful for her to say it! I think

the Murrays would tell you that I never took a penny in my life. And when one has always been honest—oh, you *do* believe I would not go to her desk or drawers?" she cried imploringly.

"Yes, I believe you—just as I would believe Miss Neale," he answered gravely.

"Oh, thank you a thousand times!" She pressed his hand to her lips with a mute caress that touched him inexpressibly. "I was so amazed when she said that, when she called me a thief"—and Dell gave way to a flood of tears.

"My dear child, do not cry so"—and he glanced helplessly about. "Your argument *is* conclusive. No one would lose that amount without making an inquiry. She was over-suspicious, hasty."

"And I wonder if you can help me find the owner? I think it was some poor person, because one bill was old and faded. And it must have lain out there in the damp some time. But you see I cannot rest now until the matter is explained. I cannot be considered a thief!" she cried indignantly. "And I have the money to give back to the owner. Do you not think he or she ought to be able to describe it?"

"You have a shrewd, sensible head. Yes, I will think it over and try to hit upon some plan. It seems rather confusing just now. And you have said nothing to Miss Sherburne?"

"No. I wouldn't," with resentful pride. "I suppose she was very good to have such excellent care taken of me during my illness, but I couldn't talk to her about it. I told Cassy and begged her to make inquiries. I suppose I ought not to have used it."

He could not blame her in her present weak state. In fact, he was inclined to be lenient under any circumstances.

"We shall be sure to learn, somehow. And now do

not distress yourself. I am glad you are to be here under the doctor's care. Miss Carew would charm any one back to health. And some time we will talk the subject over again, when you are stronger."

For he had a vague idea that the matter ought to be set in its true light to her. If she were only a boy! But her entreating eyes disarmed him. He felt that she had not been fairly treated, and that the accusation made on such slight ground was cruelly unjust. He had not seen Miss Sherburne since that unfortunate day. Mr. Beaumanoir, he found, inclined strongly to the belief that the money belonged to Miss Sherburne, but he could not think Lyndell had deliberately taken it.

Dell had been studying the grave, refined face. It seemed to her she saw so much more in faces than she dreamed of three months ago.

"I hope, in the years to come," she said, in a soft, almost pleading tone, "that I shall not disappoint any ideals or plans you may form for me. When I get well I am going to try very earnestly to study, to improve, to be like"—no, she could not quite pattern after Violet Beaumanoir—"to be what the future mistress of Sherburne House ought to be," she continued, with slow gravity. "It has all been so strange to me, and at first I wanted to throw it all up and return to the Murrays. But papa Murray explained a good many things this last time, and I understood them better. You know I had been an eager, heedless child, and now I am going on to womanhood. I don't suppose I could ever be like Miss Neale."

"All characters develop, ripen; she is the most beautiful and gracious pattern a young girl could take," he said, with an unusual fervor.

Certainly, with such an ideal before her, she could not fail of reaching some of the finer heights.

"I shall be out again to see you," he said, as he caught sight of the doctor's stalwart figure passing the window.

They were to indulge in a little ride together. The doctor tried to save Sunday as much for rest and refreshment as he could.

Miss Neale came in to say good-bye to her guest.

"I suppose I couldn't come out and see your children?" Dell pleaded, when the gentlemen were gone.

"Why, yes—if you feel strong enough"—and Miss Neale smiled. "Or I will bring them in here. I generally do for their last bit of music."

"Oh, do let them come in!" cried Dell eagerly. "I suppose I can sit up in an easy-chair?"

"Of course."

Dell settled herself. The little throng filed in rather bashfully. They were all sorts and sizes and colors, but they looked extremely picturesque, and were scrubbed until they shone.

Miss Neale had been reading the story of Joseph and his brethren. Indeed, it had been given them as their lesson to ponder over during the week, and now Miss Neale asked one of the largest girls to tell what she remembered of it. It was a rather blundering version, yet it had a touch of simple pathos that brought the tears to Dell's eyes. When she halted beyond redemption, a bright little boy with beady eyes and a soft yellow brown skin held up his hand with the eager exclamation—"Let me, Missus; I know;" and he was allowed to proceed. Some one corrected him when he failed. There were bright, shrewd, and almost laughable comments, but in the main they proved their interest, and a fair share of memory. Miss Neale endeavored to strengthen the moral points, setting the treachery, selfishness, and falsehood of the brethren in the strongest light, contrasting it with their after experience in the threatened loss of Benjamin. Dell listened with a tender interest. Never had the old story appeared so beautiful.

Then Miss Neale went to the piano and played the

ever beautiful and touching "Evening Hymn." The voices were not very well trained, but some were remarkably beautiful. They made a sort of awkward decession, giving an imaginary pull to their forelocks, which were of shortest wool.

"Oh," said Dell, "I feel as if I had been to a delightful Sunday-school myself. How good you are to take so much trouble! And the children were so bright and amusing. I have seen white children who did not answer as well."

"They are very eager to learn, and the sooner we develop their intelligence and give them a sense of personal responsibility, the quicker we shall have a better class of laborers. After having kept them in ignorance for generations, it is plainly our duty to make some amends. You at the North have the emigrants, but these people are our very own, and ought to be a solemn charge to us. There is quite a large Sunday-school at Sherburne."

"Is there?" asked Dell, surprised. Then, with a rising flush, she said: "Miss Sherburne requested me not to go to the quarters."

"You are so new to Southern life," and Miss Neale smiled but made no further comment, as she sat down to the piano and sang several beautiful hymns that delighted Dell. Then the doctor came in, and they had supper.

She was allowed to sit up a little while, but she confessed to a feeling of fatigue, so he carried her upstairs. It had been such a happy day that she wanted to keep awake and think it over, but she unconsciously floated away to the land of dreams.

"Whittingham was quite shocked to see such a change," began the doctor presently. "He is curiously roused and indignant, and hopes we shall be able to keep her here for a month at least. I fancy Miss Sherburne has not been quite fair, although she is ultra-conscientious on

some points. Ah, how much sooner a little love discerns the right path than the most strenuous duty !”

“ It *is* a pity that she is Lyndell Sherburne. It will be hard getting fitted to the place. She is such an ingrained democrat, and so loyal to her friends.”

“ We do not need to go far to account for the latter trait,” and the doctor gave a soft little laugh. “ The Sherburnes are loyal and honorable to a degree, and poor Ned was—well, rather obstinate.”

“ I wonder what her mother was like ? We have heard only one side of the story. It will make the position rather sad for the child —— ”

“ Oh, there are some papers, Whittingham has them in safe keeping, that are to be given to her when she is fifteen ; letters from her mother. So she will not be left in ignorance. Of course there will be a good deal of friction, and I think, with him, that she would be better off in some good school. Still there can be no thought of that this side of Christmas. She must get thoroughly well. She ought to have a pony and no end of outdoor exercise. You are not tired of her ? ” and he gave a quick, whimsical glance.

“ I like her very much. I hope to make a lasting friendship. And she is extremely grateful.”

“ Good,” appended the doctor, turning to his book.

Julius stopped the next morning to ask about Missy, and announce that “ de young ladies comin’ over in de afternoon to see her.”

“ Oh, dear ! ” sighed Dell.

Miss Neale glanced up with a pleasant look of inquiry.

“ Why must people live together who do not like each other ? And it is so queer to think of them all as relatives. Why, they are my aunts and cousins, yet I seem quite outside of them all. I can’t get it straight or comfortable in my mind. It is *my* home, the inheritance of

my own papa. They really never had it, yet they make me feel that I am the outsider. And then I wish myself back with the Murrays. How *can* I help it?"

"My dear child," Miss Neale stooped and kissed her, "there are so many intricate points that one cannot smooth out the path in a few weeks. The Lepages and the Stanwoods have lived so much at Sherburne; and I must say they have been a very united family. Your grandfather was unusually fond of having his children around him. He felt your father's death keenly. I am sorry no one had the courage to attempt to heal the breach then, but they were under the mistaken impression that Edward Sherburne's rights ceased with his death, or that a son only could inherit. When people want to believe certain things, they are very apt to shut their eyes to all opposing points. And Leonard Beaumanoir is such a fine young man, so great a favorite with them all, that it certainly was a bitter disappointment when they found that he must positively give up all hopes of being master at Sherburne."

"I do not like him," Dell said decisively.

"Ah, then you have seen him?"

"Yes. And he said—well, I cannot remember just the words, but that *I* had crowded him out of Sherburne, and that I ought to—to admire him for giving up peaceably and not making a fight."

Miss Carew knew the subject of breaking old Mr. Sherburne's will had been considered. Had there been the slightest loophole it would have been pushed immediately. But they were not a family to make a useless scandal.

"If I could have helped coming," continued Dell, in an aggrieved tone, "I did not want to. But papa Murray said the laws of the land were higher than any person's will and desires, and that they were really made to protect the weak. At first I thought I could give it

back to them, but Mr. Whittingham told me papa's views were right and that I could not transfer it. And sometimes my heart goes up with a great bound to think the beautiful home is really mine. Only—if they must all come and stay as they like."

Dell's voice trembled, and her eyes overflowed

"My dear child," and Miss Carew held the throbbing form close in her arms, "there may be some wisdom in this discipline that you cannot see now. It is when we bear unjust trials with grace and patience that God's love is made manifest in us. Those that we bring on ourselves by our own wrongdoing, are the outcome of a simple natural law. When you come to know your cousins well, I think you will find them very pleasant, agreeable girls. And you must not fret about this matter. Your duty is now to use every effort toward recovery."

"Perhaps it is one of the troubles I had better bury awhile. It may shrivel. The doctor told me of that method."

Miss Neale smiled. Then she brought in the two half-grown Maltese kittens, whose antics so amused Dell that she laughed light-heartedly. Miss Neale found some work to cut and make ready for her sewing class of freedwomen; and Dell took a warm interest in the small incidents of their lives. Her nature was intensely sympathetic with all phases of want and sorrow.

The doctor came home in a jolly mood, and took her out for her half-hour's drive. Then there was dinner and her siesta.

Afterward Miss Neale was brushing her scanty rings of hair when she reached up and clasped her arms about her friend's neck.

"Dear Heart's Delight," she said, in a soft, coaxing tone, "will you promise not to be hurt by something I think I ought to say?"

"I do not believe you could or would say anything to really grieve me," was the kindly reply.

"I should not want to. It is this" — Dell hesitated and colored. "I feel that I ought to put on the blue flannel dress. I can't like it half as well as your lovely gift, and I look horrid in it; but you see, I'd outgrown the summer clothes and they were not suitable. Cassy hurried to make me that—and—I can't quite explain—but Miss Sherburne might feel——" Dell's voice quivered suspiciously. "It really was not her fault that I had nothing else."

Miss Neale gave a soft, heartening laugh.

"My dear child, I have been perplexing myself on the same score, and wondering if I could make *you* understand a little scruple of mine. I should not want Miss Sherburne to consider me officious, and it would break the pleasant relations the doctor desires to maintain if she fancied we meant in any way to prejudice you against her wishes and plans. When you come to make after visits, the gown will be here for you to slip on. We shall keep it as a little piece of you. And I am glad to see you have so much delicacy for another person's feelings."

"She bought me beautiful clothes," said Dell. "She would not take any of the things I had in New York. I didn't realize until I went back how expensive they really were. I suppose I ought to have appreciated them, but I didn't feel like myself in the strange place. I am to have a new wardrobe. And it is so sweet of you to understand. For I look so much nicer in this."

It seemed quite heroic to Miss Carew that any girl should be willing to be made less pretty for a principle that few would have recognized. She brought the blue gown and put it on, then she found a fleecy white wrap that she threw carelessly over her shoulders.

"You will not look quite so ghostly," she said cheer-

fully. She pushed her chair by the window, but out of the direct light. Then she stood a little table in front of her, and placed on it a great bowl of flowers. Thus she was accessible only on one side, and in some degree protected from glances that might prove embarrassing.

CHAPTER XX.

LOOKING THROUGH OTHER EYES.

A CARRIAGE load of bright young people came down the street. There was little to obstruct the vision now, for Doctor Carew had widened and straightened the old road to suit his own convenience. He was in the office compounding some medicines, but went out gayly to receive them, and marshalled them in with the rather jovial lack of ceremony that characterized him.

There were the three Beaumanoir girls, Ethel and Alice Lepage. They all greeted Miss Carew, then Millicent crossed over to Dell and took her limp hand.

"I hope you are improving," she said, in a bright yet soft tone. "Aunt Sherburne was concerned lest the journey here would prove too much, and we were glad to hear so good an account of you. And you must get well enough to enjoy some of this nice weather."

"The doctor takes me out," Dell replied stiffly.

"And auntie wished me to explain to you that you would soon have some appropriate attire. Mamma did a little shopping for you while she was in the city, and Cassy and a seamstress are busy at work. Can you think of any special article?"

Dell colored, and somehow her eyes fell on her gown.

"Cassy is making you some pretty wrappers, one a pink flannel with soft brown tufts. You are so pale that pink will be a cheerful color, and I think cheerfulness indispensable to an invalid. I had a long time getting over scarlet fever when I was about your age. And Doctor Carew was so good to me."

"He *is* good. And Miss Neale is the loveliest of nurses. One ought to get well here." Then Dell colored suddenly.

"I am glad you are content and—and comfortable."

Dell glanced out of the window at two little darky boys tumbling over each other in their anxiety to reach the house first. She felt strangely embarrassed. There seemed nothing in common with these girls, though anywhere else she would have liked Millicent.

Miss Neale was keeping up a bright talk with the others, and the doctor was teasing Ethel about her tour through Germany, giving her some of the most outlandish of pronunciations. Violet was explaining a proposed picnic to Kirton Bluffs on a nutting expedition, with a dinner, gypsy-fashion, in the woods. The Floyds and the Masons were to join them, and Mrs. Fanshawe was to go. They all liked her so much. Aunt Sherburne was so sorry not to have Dell able to begin her studies.

Little fragments floated over to the invalid. They were all so bright and merry, so assured, so at home on any subject, that Dell felt weak and ignorant, and on the very outside rim.

Some one proposed their going, and they all rose. What a pretty group it was! They threw careless good-byes to Dell, who scarcely raised her eyes. Frances hoped she would soon be well enough to come home. Millicent gave her hand a little squeeze.

The doctor went out and put the girls in the carriage.

"What an awful stick!" exclaimed Ethel as soon as they had started. "And a horrid fright as well."

"You did not succeed in rousing any enthusiasm," Violet declared, with a rather sharp laugh at Millicent.

"Aunt Sherburne is right; she is only about half civilized."

"Then we must try to civilize her. Have you ever considered the other side, girls?" asked Millicent.

"There is only a flat, imponderable surface, length and breadth"—and Ethel giggled.

"You must remember how hard it has been for her to come among strangers, where everything was different, to relinquish her old friends and interests——"

"Friends! That *is* good! A pack of wild heathens! Auntie was telling mamma how she first came upon them, a great crowd of boys and girls, old women and babies, and our lovely cousin dancing to entertain them. It *was* disgusting! And I should imagine her about as graceful as an elephant."

"She was awful fat at first," interpolated Frances.

"Girls, this is certainly 'all uncharitableness,' if not malice. We have all danced out of doors and enjoyed it wonderfully," said Millicent, with rebuking decision.

"She is our cousin, and she has come to live among us. We ought to make her welcome, instead of feeling that she had no right to come. She could not help it."

"Well, we *can't* help feeling that she has no *real* right!"

"You forget that, being Uncle Edward's daughter, she had *every* right. Great-grandpapa left Sherburne to Uncle Edward; none of the other children had any claim on it. Really, we are *her* guests. That is the proper way to look at it."

"Indeed, Milly, Aunt Sherburne has some rights in the estate," said Violet, with dignity.

"Yes, the right to live there, and now she manages the estate, yet she is *not* compelled to do that. But it seems to me that we have all sadly forgotten our courtesy to a stranger, who has been brought among us by no wish of her own."

"Well, we really have had no opportunity," retorted Ethel. "And if there is nothing about her to like——"

"She has beautiful eyes," said Alice.

"So far she has not commended herself very strongly

to our sympathies," remarked Violet, rather crossly. "She has made Aunt Sherburne a great deal of trouble and shown herself almost ungovernable. And her being ill was mostly her own fault. Miss Neale will cuddle her up and spoil her. And I did not see that she was particularly delighted with your advances, Millicent."

"We must all remember that she is at a disadvantage everywhere," said Millicent, with a sweet gravity. "We have all grown up together. Sherburne House has been like a second home to us, yet I dare say every one of us has had some moments of rebelling at Aunt Aurelia's rule. We were sure of her love to begin with. But if any one of us had been compelled to go among strangers, where customs were different——"

"Why, they *are* different at school," interposed Ethel. "And when one is traveling."

"Yes, but we know that is only temporary. We have the dear home people to love and to write to, and we can confess our troubles and perplexities——"

"You do not mean to infer that Aunt Aurelia was wrong in not allowing her to keep up with those Murrays!" cried Violet, in amazement.

"I am not going to blame anybody, or discuss Aunt Aurelia's duties," returned Millicent, with a decision that awed the flock somewhat. "I simply mean that we ought to treat her as we would like to be treated if one of us was Lyndell Sherburne coming to her father's house. Oh, girls, we have some duties toward this stranger. She cannot help being our cousin. And out of our happy lives we ought to make her glad, rather than sorry, it is so."

They were silent some minutes, then Ethel began about the nutting expedition. Millicent was haunted by the pale, sad face and shrinking manner; in fact it had given her some twinges of conscience. A few words dropped by Cassy had set her to thinking. She was the

eldest, and could see both sides of the matter. If Lyndell longed so desperately for her New York friends, she must be capable of warm affection. And it seemed hard when one thought of the lonely child confined to lessons all summer, while the others were revelling in joyous freedom. Even if she were untrustworthy, some effort of kindness must be made to awake a longing for better things.

After the visitors had left the room, Lyndell turned her face to the window, trying very hard to repress her tears, but the stream gathered in strength and overflowed. It was a pathetic kind of crying. The doctor came up close to her chair, and took her face in his hands, which were plump and soft, turning it gently around.

"My little pilgrim," he said tenderly, "are you not on the verge of the Slough of Despond? Come, let me lift you out of it," and suiting the action to the word, he raised her in his arms, seated himself in her place, and drew her to his heart, as only the experience of fatherhood can. She cried softly awhile; the shelter touched her inexpressibly. Then she raised her head a trifle.

"I am a very April-showery girl, and—silly."

"Weak in body and in the nerves. And I'll venture that six months ago you never cried for—well, I can't quite call it a trifle, either. All this blooming health and strength was a trying contrast."

"And they were so pretty"—a long sob shook her fragile frame. "You will think me foolish—I did not use to mind whether I was pretty or not."

"Well, we are going to make a very good-looking girl of you presently, and you must help. I have a theory that everybody ought to be made pretty, and one can't begin too soon."

"Oh, do you think"—and Dell's eyes were full of eager light, while her voice quivered.

“ Randolph,” said his sister warningly. She still kept to the fine old theories that goodness must be placed in the front rank, and beauty served at the second table. But she had always been pretty.

“ I think we ought all to be as handsome as possible ; and we should be willing to try for it, just as we try for a great many other things. We all like it,” and his eyes twinkled humorously at Miss Neale. “ But first, there can be no real beauty without good health, and very little without a good temper. Anger, despondency, sulkiness, and all the passions act directly on the heart, the circulation, and derange the blood. That affects the skin and the brain, and unwholesome thoughts interfere with digestion pretty nearly as much as an unwholesome meal. It seems very easy to drop into a scowl when you are cross, and there is an extremely unpleasant way of shutting one’s mouth. There are sharp, forbidding faces that never draw forth friendly responses ; there are voices that rasp you like a file, and you *do* shun these people. If by any means you come to unearth a streak of goodness unexpectedly, you regret the many faults for which you have to apologize continually. These unpleasant qualities do not ennoble any virtues, and you always think how the virtues would shine in a better setting. We should laugh at a jeweller who put a lovely diamond in a clumsy iron ring. He might say : ‘ Of course everybody can see that it is a diamond ’—but it is really undervaluing the gem.”

Lyndell was listening with eager interest.

“ I’ve often thought about the ten talents. One might have been beauty. And its possessor no doubt said—shrewd man that he was—‘ I must turn this to some account. I must show people that beauty is a good and pleasant thing, beside being pretty to look at. Rightly used, it will give me influence ; it will bring me friends ; it will enable me to carry sunshine to homes where the

people live in a clouded atmosphere and have no faith in the sweeter graces of life.' And perhaps with his one talent of beauty he gathered in many more—various other talents. When you come to be really interested in the good old book in which all ages will find some of the grandest truths, I hope this will linger in your mind—'No man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself.' Young people ought to study it out early in life. You can make a truth grand and noble and inspiring. You can also make it so disagreeable that people will hate it. And then you tell or act a lie against truth itself."

Dell crept closer. It felt so good to be cuddled in great, strong, tender arms. And she wondered a little—had she been making truth lovely? She was quite sure Miss Sherburne had not.

"But my text was beauty. When you get better, I want you to study to acquire it. You must keep yourself in good health by plenty of fresh air and exercise. You must learn how to stand, how to walk, how to be gracious and kindly, refined, good-tempered, truthful, and honorable. I knew of some one who had a great swarm of bees picked out of the Bible. Their honey never failed. They were—'Be patient, be kindly affectioned one toward another,' and dozens more of them. What a sweet world it would be if everybody kept a hive!"

Dell raised her head and gave a soft little laugh.

"Go on," she pleaded. "I like to hear you talk."

But a knock at the door interrupted them.

"If yeh please, Missus, Lizzy Jackson's here, an' she wanter see Missy Lyndell."

"Send her in," exclaimed the doctor. "We owe her a good deal for past favors."

"Didn't I think she was Mamma Murray! I felt so safe when she was there," confessed Dell.

Lizzy came in rather diffidently. She shook hands

with the doctor, as he stretched his out at once ; greeted Miss Carew respectfully, and stared at Dell.

"Oh, Missy!" she cried, "I heard you was gettin' well——"

"So she is," declared the doctor, "so she is! And I am glad you know your duty well enough to come and inquire about her."

"But you's mighty pale an' thin. Cassy tol' me how the good doctor car'y you off, en I come."

"Did you think I had spirited her to the moon?" The doctor laughed, with a mellow sound. "I'm not sure about the climate. I hear they've burned up all their fuel, and she must be kept good and warm, so some roses will blossom on her cheeks presently."

"She's come to the right place. En I hope the good Lawd'll sen' her all what he promis' when he say dey shan't want no good things when dey waiten' on him."

"And we are deeply indebted to you, Lizzy. I don't know what we should have done without you. It was fortunate that she took to you."

"It was when you sang," said Dell, in a dreamy fashion. "That suggested Mamma Murray. And O Lizzy, I never can repay you, only by feeling *very* grateful. But I liked you so much the day you gave me the berries. And I hope some time——" Then Dell sighed. If she had some money of her very own to buy a gift for Lizzy! Perhaps Mr. Whittingham would do it.

After Lizzy had answered the questions and comments, she still lingered, twisting up the corner of her apron as if something embarrassed her.

"Did you want to see me especially?" asked the doctor, for he felt the real errand had not been confessed.

"Oh, no; Marse Doctor. It was Miss Dell." She dropped her eyes and shuffled her feet slightly. Miss

Carew left the room on some errand. Lizzy came closer to Dell, and looked at her with deprecating wistfulness. "Please, Miss Dell, Cassy tol' me you want her to—to 'quire 'bout losin' somfin'——"

"Oh, was it the money, Lizzy?" Dell smiled joyously.

"Yes, Missy, beggin' you's pardon—Cassy was down to de cabin las' night. Me an' my ol' man was settin' dere, an' he say ——"

Dell sat up straight and turned a flushed face toward the doctor. "It was about some money I found," she explained eagerly. "I told Mr. Whittingham yesterday, and I wanted to ask you ——"

The doctor pressed her hand as a check. Then he glanced up in Lizzy's face.

"Why?" he inquired. "Do you know who lost any?"

"My ol' man, Marse Doctor. He lose fifteen dollars one ebenin', comin' 'cross de plantation. Miss 'Reely she done forbid de folks crossin' dat er way, but Homer, he hurryin' erlong late like, an' cut 'cross fer short. He done pull out his 'baccy bag wunst, but he don' 'member nottin' else. When he git home dat money clean gone. He doan say nottin' first, but jes' sarch an' sarch. Den he go over to Marse Mason, and he say he dead sure he pay Homer, 'n' he giv' him two tolerble good bills en one ol' one. He hunt all roun', en go back en furth, en he never fin' it. Den he tell Julius he giv' a dollar fer any one findin' it."

"Oh, it must be his, Lizzy. I am so glad," cried Dell excitedly.

"Did—Missy—fin' it?" asked Lizzy hesitatingly.

"Yes."

"We must look into the matter," interrupted the doctor, with an air of authority. "When did Homer lose it?"

"He done got de date, Marse Doctor. Jes' somwher' pass de middle er August. Homer doan tell no lies 'bout hisself——"

"And you found it——" looking sharply at Dell.

"The very last of August, just before Miss Sherburne came home. And if I *had* known——"

"We doan go up to de big house much. An' Homer he feel queer 'bout makin' any fuss. Fer ye see 'twould jes' set de hull tribe huntin', an' dere's plenty who say 'findin's is keepin's,' en we'd never lite on it no more. But ef de good Lawd jes' let it go safe to you's han's, oh, Missy, we kin never be t'ankful 'nuff!"

Dell colored vividly. Safe in her hands. Had it been so entirely safe? A curious sense of responsibility thrilled through her.

"I wish you'd send Homer over, and let me talk to him. I'm a little in the dark about this. But if it is all right, Miss Dell will hand over the money. It's lucky it fell into such good hands. Are you going right back?"

"Yes, Marse Doctor. I come ober to town jes' soon es I get tru washin'."

"And walked, of course. Well, 'Rius must drive you back, and he can bring Homer."

"Oh, de good Lawd bless you, Marse Doctor——"

Lizzy's voice broke. Then she seized both of Dell's hands and wrung them passionately. Dell gave a sob, but uttered no word. When Lizzy closed the door, she hid her face on the doctor's broad shoulder and was silent, save for the convulsive tremors that shook her now and then.

"Dell," he said with soft entreaty.

"Oh, doctor—maybe Miss Sherburne *is* right, and I'm wicked above everybody! I want to tell you—and if you think it right to send me back——"

"There, don't worry about going back. And don't cry. You will get all nervous and knocked up." He

wiped her eyes and smiled cheerfully. "Surely finding a sum of money isn't such a bad thing when one wants to restore it. How was it?"

There was a tremulous huskiness in her voice as she began, starting with her wild dream of getting away, and the five dollars Mr. Whittingham had given her. "And I prayed for some more;" she cried with a strange fervor. "I didn't really suppose it would come before Christmas, but I meant to pray right straight on; and I never thought about there being any wrong in it." Then she described the real delight of the week without Miss Sherburne, and the evening of her wonderful luck; her great surprise; her waiting for inquiries to be made about the money, her assurance that it did not belong to Miss Hendricks or Miss Sherburne; that Cassy nor any one in the house had lost it.

"I never thought of the quarters," said Dell. "I had been forbidden to go there. And Miss Sherburne seemed to think none of them told the truth, and that they were not honest. I was afraid the wrong person would claim it."

"Stop here and tell me what the money was like, if you can remember," interposed the doctor. "We must have it correctly identified."

"It was as Lizzy said. There was one old bill, a little worn, with ragged edges, and two good ones, but they had been in the damp, and blown about in that queer little whirl. And it seemed so strange—just as if my prayer *was* answered. I can't understand ——"

"There are a good many puzzles, child. I wonder what you would have done if you had been home with the Murrays?" and the doctor glanced curiously down into the brown eyes.

"Why I should have taken it to mamma. But then I shouldn't have wanted anything ——" She paused, blushing and confused. "I knew I could have it re-

placed. I wanted to get away so dreadfully that I did not think of anything else. Was it so very, very wrong?"

"What do you think of it now?" he asked, with tender gravity.

"I suppose it wasn't right," hesitatingly.

"Is it a matter of supposition?"

There was a great struggle in Dell's soul. She raised her head bravely. Her eyes were full of tears.

"No; it was not honest. Papa Murray said so, and he begged me to try at once to find the owner. But—I never touched a penny of Miss Sherburne's. And I have all the money."

Dell gave a long, quivering sob.

"I am glad you are a girl. I do not suppose there will ever come a temptation of this kind again in your life. But if it had been my boy——"

"Couldn't you forgive him?" she besought piteously.

"Yes, I should forgive him. Fathers and mothers always do. But it would have almost broken my heart. 'Like as a father pitieth his children,' and if the Lord had not known that was the nearest to the divine love he could not have used it. But I should always wonder if he would be proof against temptation in the future."

"Oh," she sobbed, "you will not like me any more. And I was beginning to feel so happy here. Maybe Miss Sherburne *is* right, and I am a miserable, deceitful little wretch. But I never was until I came here. Oh, if I could only be Dell Murray again."

She made a confused and desperate effort to get away. Her heart was full of passionate anguish.

"My child," his arms gently restrained her. "Listen—you must not cry so, or I shall have to carry you to bed at once, and you will miss seeing Homer. And I care a great deal for you. I am glad you had the courage to tell me the story in such a straightforward manner. I

had heard the most of it from Mr. Whittingham—and I do not suppose the Murrays really approved of it." There was almost a smile in his voice.

"No, they didn't," admitted Dell. "But they were glad to see me. And oh, I think I should have died if I hadn't gone somewhere!"

"It has been a sad tangle, and I am very glad for Miss Sherburne's sake, as well as your own, that it is going to be properly cleared up——"

"I'm glad the money belongs to some one else. She must have known it was not hers!" Dell said, the sense of injury still rankling in her soul at the remembrance of the unjust accusation.

"You both have something to forgive. My poor child, try to be a little tranquil, or you will fall seriously ill again, and Miss Sherburne will have no faith in my prescription of change."

Miss Neale opened the door gently.

"Sheba has supper a little earlier than usual, as she wants to go out. Will you come?"

"Yes. First I am going to give my little girl a dose of the elixir of peace, and let her lie quiet here on the sofa. Then she shall have a bit of toast. We have an important case on hand this evening, and it stands us in hand to have our wits sharpened."

He kissed her fondly as he laid her down. Her arms still clung to his neck.

"You are so good," she murmured brokenly.

"I want to be good enough to fill papa Murray's place, here, to you. My poor little lamb, you need a friend sadly."

He prepared a composing draught, and Dell swallowed it meekly.

"Now, take a little nap if you can. Dismiss all troubles from your mind."

He touched the soft hair lightly, almost as if he had

breathed a benediction over her. The throbbing nerves subsided presently, but she could not even feel sleepy. Many thoughts crowded into her mind. A curious consciousness that she had never experienced before, a sense of individual responsibility, the sudden enlightenment of soul that comes late to some children; indeed, in not a few lives. The delightful indifference had passed forever. Yet she clung to the departing brightness, as if the rest of her days must pass in a sort of semi-shade, where the very sunshine might have a right and a wrong. For Duty does not always put on her golden side as she comes to us in the morning,

CHAPTER XXI.

THE DUTY NEAREST.

DOCTOR CAREW ate his supper with unusual gravity. He wished this trying event had not occurred just at this juncture. Dell had not gained enough strength to cope with it successfully. He hated to have her nerves so shaken up. There were various aspects of the case that ought to be settled now, once for all. Yet he was as glad as the child to have the mystery solved in this creditable manner.

Miss Neale glanced anxiously at him, and suddenly he intercepted her eyes.

"Lizzy told you, doubtless. There is no question in my mind as to the real ownership of the money. The thing that *does* bother me is the conviction that it would be unwise to get it all settled without giving notice to Miss Sherburne. We have always been such good friends. And for the sake of Dell's future friendship with us, I should hate to have any uncomfortable feelings. But if I went to her I should lose my temper. It really was monstrous to accuse the poor child with no better certainty than she had. Dell will always feel this keenly. If Miss Sherburne loved her, it would not be hard to say she was mistaken. But she will not condescend that much. It would be cowardly to send you; it would be too great a triumph to ask Dell to write, though nothing would suit the midget better. It is cruel to cut her off from such an enjoyment!" and he gave a humorous half smile.

"There is Mr. Whittingham."

"True. Thank you, Neale. I was floundering round in a hole. Whittingham is the very one, and it will be a secret delight to him. He is unusually interested in the child. And Dell will take that reasonably. To-morrow she won't be fit for the least thing. I'm sorry enough this came so soon."

"You think she realizes"—tender as Miss Neale was, it was not her nature to make compromises with wrong.

"She has never had much thinking to do. I hate prigs and supersensitive children who are continually on the stool of repentance. She'll be sorry all her life long, though she did it with the utmost innocence. She went to praying, and really, she is not the first one who has helped to answer her own prayer." He smiled a little, with a dreamy expression in his eyes. "You see if Miss Sherburne had shown even ordinary kindness, this never could have happened. Among them all there ought to be some one to evince a little affection for the child. But all those girls have taken the cue from their elders."

"Millicent made a very earnest endeavor to be friendly."

"Yes, I saw that. And Dell almost snubbed her. But then Millicent could make allowance."

"Ef you please, Marse Doctor, Homer Jackson's come."

"Give him a good cup of tea, Dinah. I'll see him presently." Then the doctor looked helplessly at Miss Neale. "We always do burn our fingers with other people's chestnuts," he said ruefully. "Make a bit of toast."

He returned to Dell. She was lying there with wide-open eyes.

"You are bad at minding." He shook his head slowly, but his eyes gleamed with amusement. "Will you have some supper?"

"No," she answered.

He felt her pulse. "You must eat some toast Miss Neale is making, or you will mortally offend her. Homer has come over. We'll hear his story, and then turn him over to Mr. Whittingham for a settlement."

"But *I* must give him the money ——"

"My dear," the doctor took both hands in his own, "I am going to ask you to be noble enough to give up this gratification. You have the right, of course. But to count out Miss Sherburne so utterly will only widen the breach. It can never be talked over, but will rankle between you, and if you mean to make a new beginning ——"

Dell's heart swelled, and her eyes filled as she compressed her quivering lips.

"Couldn't you do it to please me, if from no higher motive?" and his entreating tone touched her.

"But I wanted" — the voice was full of pathos.

"We will have Homer come in and state his side, and you shall say whatever you like. And believe me, some time you will be glad that you turned the case over to Mr. Whittingham. No one can say Homer took the advantage of a child, or that the proof was not sufficiently convincing. It will really be better for him ——"

Miss Neale came in with the toast on one of her century-old china plates. She bent over and kissed Dell with a tenderness that was revivifying.

The child crowded down a few mouthfuls and drank some milk.

"Couldn't I sit up?" she asked weakly.

"Why, of course." Then the doctor settled her in the great splint chair, and put a stool for her feet.

"Now, are you ready?" he asked.

Dell nodded.

Homer came in, glancing with furtive curiosity at Dell, as he nervously fingered his old wool hat. He

was a tall mulatto, rather thin and stooping in the shoulders, looking a good dozen years older than his age.

"This is Miss Lyndell Sherburne," said the doctor. "She found a sum of money some time ago, and has been waiting to hear inquiries made about it. Then she was ill, you know. So she set Cassy at trying to find the owner. And now we want to hear your story."

"You'se berry good, Marse Doctor." He bowed with some embarrassment. "An' de young Missy. Yes, I jes' done los' fifteen dollars, squar'. I kin 'member jes' how dey looked. Ef I cud see it I'd tell in a minnit," his face brightening with a certain assurance.

A flush mounted to the very edge of Dell's brow. The money could never be identified in that manner.

"Let's hear your story first, Homer. We'll trust a good deal to your word."

"Well, Marse Doctor, 'twar August twenty-six. Marse Chawls Mason look ober de books en git dem figgers. Der was tree fibe dollar bills, one ole en ragged. I tok de short cut tru de Pines, en as I struk dem, my pipe done gib out. I clar fergit I put de money in dat pocket, 'cause turrer one had busted out wid some nails. So I jes' fill my pipe an' fin' one match, den I come on jes' above Sherbon' House en cross the carri'ge road, en shuffle on ober to quarters. My little gal cut her han' pooty bad, en I nebber min' about dat ar money tell after supper, en I cayn't fin' it nowher'. When de chil'en go to bed Lizzy sweep de room, en we hunt and hunt outside en in. Den I 'member 'bout fillin' my pipe, so nex' mawnin' yarly I goes ober all de way. En for t'ree er four days I huntin' all my spare time, en cayn't find hide ner hair ob dem. Den I done tell Julius, en he hones' as de law en de gospel bof. En he say he keep sharp lookout fer every one free wid deir money like dey ain't earned it hones'. But he nebber hear no 'quirin'.

En we bof search, but we nebber fin' dat ar money. 'Twas monst'ous car'less, Marse Doctor, en like lookin' fer needle in stack er hay! I done tell Marse Chawls 'bout it, but I don' say much. Der's so many wuthless niggers roun'. En dey hab sight er trouble up to de big house wid Missy en all. Den Lizzy say nebber min' so much worryin'. 'De good Lawd he gib me de nussin' ob Miss Dell, en dat make it straight.'"

Dell was crying softly, with a strange thankfulness that she had made some amends by her very illness.

"En yuh fin' 'em, Missy, so Cassy said. Seems like a mir'cle. I'se payin' fer a bit er groun', en dat ar sum seem monst'ous big fer a pore hard-wurkin' darky to lose. Shorely de Lawd will bless you, Missy, fer keepin' it safe, en yuh sick en all! En I hopes I've made it plain, Marse Doctor. Homer Jackson ain't no t'ievin', lyin' nigger."

"If Miss Lyndell is satisfied. She can tell you where she found it. The description of the bills is correct."

"It was just at the edge of the path up by the house, tangled in some leaves. The wind must have blown it there. And I know it must be yours, for no one in the house lost any. I'm so glad to find the owner."

"T'ank yuh, Missy, a hundred times." Homer made a shuffling bow. "Fer yuh kin tell Missy dat I wouldn't 'sturb de house en hunt roun' fer somfin' I ain't loss. I jes' 'spected some of dem triflin' niggers fin' it en spend it fer rum en frolickin'. En we all hope, Missy, yuh'll git well en grow up to be our young Mistis, fer dough we ain't slaves any more, we doan fergit all de ol' times. But yuh look mighty slim en white, en Lizzy she say jes' a mir'cle yuh pull tru. De good doctor, he jes' done his bes'."

Dell raised her head and tried to clear her throat of the sobs that would swell up in it.

"Mr. Whittingham will give you the money," she

said, in a steady tone. "And I shall never forget that I owe my life to Lizzy and—Doctor Carew."

"I'll see Whittingham to-morrow, Homer."

The man worked his way slowly toward the door, pulling at his old hat, and reiterating his thankfulness and his best wishes for Missy.

She leaned her head down on the doctor's shoulder.

"You shall do just as you think best," she said tremulously.

"I think it best for you to go to bed at once," he subjoined, with a kind of gay peremptoriness. "I'll carry you up, and Miss Neale shall come and soothe your shaken nerves. All the rest will keep. There'll be a new day."

She made no objection. He gave her some tender, fatherly kisses that comforted her inmost soul. But she was desperately tired. It seemed an effort even to breathe as she lay in her comfortable cot, and though she heard the tranquil sound of Miss Carew's voice, she could not follow the lines or even remember the subject. Her brain was in a tangle concerning the money, and her nerves in a worse tangle of utter fatigue. Indeed, she had quite a restless night, and the doctor felt really anxious the next morning.

"There's not much strength to go upon yet," he said to his sister. "I do not believe she would have recovered up at Sherburne House. And Neale, we are the second set of conspirators to keep Len Beaumanoir out of a handsome heritage. Do you feel guilty?"

She smiled faintly. "Whatever is God's will——"

"His will is that we shall do our whole duty, not half or quarter because we prefer some other result. I think if Dell were to die, Miss Sherburne would absolutely fret herself into the grave, going over all the things she might have done. It's curious what an amount of self-

condemnation really good people can have, and be so unwilling to make a change in their present line of conduct. Of course it is hard all around. For I think Dell would have been quite as happy growing up with the Murrays. Well, we must trust to the future and do our best in the present."

Lyndell slept all the morning. The doctor took in Mr. Whittingham, who was very glad the solution of the mystery had been reached.

"For various reasons, great as the pleasure would be to Lyndell to restore the money with her own hands, I think it better that she should have nothing more to do with it. If you will see Miss Sherburne and give her the option of examining Homer, and pay him yourself, there can be no trouble made for the future. It is not giving the child any authority over Miss Sherburne's head."

"Yes, yes, you are quite right. And I see it will be much better for me to take the responsibility. I'll ride over this afternoon. And the child is doing nicely?"

"Not as well as I could wish. All this excitement has been bad. But it had to get settled some time."

Late in the afternoon Mr. Whittingham made his appearance at Sherburne House, to learn that the ladies were out driving, but expected back every moment. He was glad of the opportunity to assure Cassy that there was no doubt of the money belonging to Homer.

"If you please, Mr. Whittin'am," said Cassy, in her soft-toned, but pleading manner. "I'd rather you wouldn't say Miss Dell put me up to ask. Miss Sherburne would feel as if I'd interfered some way. I've been awful careful and on guard, 'cause it would only 'a' made trouble and not helped the poor child."

"Yes, I understand," nodding appreciatively.

Miss Sherburne certainly had improved with the change. A delicate pink shadowed her cheeks again, and the sharpness had vanished from her features. A little of it crept back as she listened to his story.

"I do not wish to take any part in the matter," she said haughtily. "If you are convinced, that is sufficient. The money does not belong to any one in this house. I *was* afraid at first Lyndell had taken it, but my accounts show no deficiency, and I wrote to inquire of Miss Hendricks. The simple truth at first would have saved much trouble ; but it is an old adage that what is bred in the bone is certain to find a way out. I hope this will be a sufficient lesson to the child, and that some time she will come to appreciate the good fortune that certainly has been thrust upon her, and found her every way unfitted for it."

"Very well," he commented. "Since you do not care to question Homer——"

"I wash my hands of the whole business."

He rose. Her invitation to remain to tea was lacking in its usual hospitality ; but he had no desire to stay, since he wished to see Homer and pay over the money. He felt disappointed at Miss Sherburne's lofty indifference ; it seemed as if she might have softened toward Dell. Homer Jackson's honesty was rarely called in question. Of course it was something for her to admit that she had not lost it.

Indeed it did not seem possible now to Miss Sherburne that she had made this terribly unjust accusation in such an unreasonable manner. It was simply what any one would have suspected. Any mother would have had a right to question a child. Dell's duty was to bring her the sum of money immediately on her return, when she might have made an effort to find the owner. There certainly *was* concealment, which was the first step toward dishonesty. On the whole, Lyndell

had escaped the real responsibility. Her journey and her temper had brought about the illness.

True, there were certain twinges of conscience concerning the days she had kept the child confined to her room. She even hated to think she had deprived her of her regular meals. But what punishment was there for such a great, defiant girl!

The society of her nieces had already proved an inestimable benefit to Miss Sherburne. It had relaxed her strenuous train of thought. She had brooded continually over Dell's defects since the first unlucky glance that June afternoon. The natural antipathy had been intensified. But Mrs. Lepage's broader ideas, and the certainty that this was Edward's child, the philosophical acceptance of the fact by the others, while their disappointment was none the less keen, disposed her to less bitter thoughts. There was the pleasant excitement of friends dropping in, the gayety and confusion of the children in their eager delight, where before had reigned an almost unendurable solitude of retrospect and disappointment.

She was quite relieved that Mr. Whittingham should settle the matter in his own way. That Dell should have had a voice in it, or relinquished any satisfaction, did not occur to her. And she resolved never to refer to it. It would be best to treat the whole escapade with severe silence. Lyndell should have no excuse for considering it a heroic exploit.

She announced to her nieces the conclusion. Mrs. Beaumanoir was unfeignedly glad, and the Masons added their share of gratulation. Homer Jackson was a very fair carpenter, and in much demand as a man who could be depended upon better than the average of his compeers.

Mr. Whittingham came over to the doctor's that evening. He found Dell pale and languid, with great rings

under her eyes. She smiled gratefully and thanked him for his kindness, but seemed disinclined for any special conversation.

And all the next day Miss Neale remarked the silence, and surprised tears in her eyes now and then. She was not sullen or cold, but the gladness of the first few days seemed to have vanished, and left her a pitiful little ghost. She laid on the old sofa and watched the kittens race and play, but there was an absent expression in her eyes. She listened to the soft voice reading, but it was with a dreamy aspect, as though the soul was wandering in some other land.

It was lowering, with a rather high wind in the afternoon, so there could be no thought of a drive. The doctor was over in the next town, where there had been a railroad accident. Bedtime came before he returned.

"I hope you are not homesick," Miss Neale said gently, as she tucked her in and kissed her.

"I couldn't be homesick for anything that—that it was right for me to have. I've gone out of the old world where everything came without any thought. And now I have to think. It seems as if I was so old, almost grown up. I can't get fitted into the new life. Something jars and troubles me."

"Can't you tell me?"

Dell put her arms about Miss Carew's neck. "No," she replied slowly. "There isn't enough to tell any one. It's all a tangle. I wouldn't know where to begin."

"Maybe you'll find an end by to-morrow. Sometimes it takes two people to pick out a skein of yarn, when it has been badly reeled. And if you want any help you need not go far for it."

"Thank you," Lyndell said gravely.

Miss Carew had kindled a bit of fire on the hearth. Dell watched the fitful blaze and the soft shadows that

seemed playing hide-and-seek about the room. She was not sleepy. She had thought until her brain was in a state of restless commotion, until she was like one groping in the dark, afraid to go any farther, and not knowing how to turn back, indeed fearing in some mysterious way that there was no going back. Everything was so changed. She could see the joyous, thoughtless, laughing Dell Murray, quite as if she was some other girl. And the strange thing about it was that loving all the Murrays as she did, she didn't really want to go back and be her olden self.

For somehow she had a vague misgiving that the olden self was not quite what she used to imagine. She saw so many things that made her flush, with her face almost buried in the pillow. When she first came to Sherburne, indeed, all the summer, she had been eager to keep the old individuality. But would she have deceived and tried to outwit Mamma Murray? Then she was not good. She had not been good at all! It was so keenly humiliating.

She had not reasoned enough in her short life to separate the causes from the acts. She was overwhelmed, almost angry, to think Miss Sherburne had been in any degree right, yet her extreme honesty forbade the glaring injustice of believing that *she* had always suffered innocently. How soon she had begun to deceive! She saw the child stealing down to the library — true, the books had not been forbidden, but she knew they would have been, or kept under strict regulations, if she had asked. She had secretly gloried in her strategy. She had thought it heroic to run away. It did not look so now. Little as she had heeded papa Murray's tender chiding then, it all came back to her. She could see the softly upbraiding eyes looking into hers. And mamma, who had always been so good to her! She had lowered them in Miss Sherburne's esti-

mation by her own heedless acts. She ought to have shown the honor and uprightness of their training. Ah, what a miserable little wretch she had been ! The sense of shame brought quick tears to her eyes, the pillow was quite wet with them. Oh, how were people good and patient and noble, even when things went wrong ? Why did these thoughts come to trouble her when she was so ill and forlorn ? Her head ached, her pulses throbbed. Yet through all the distress there came a striving for something she had not hitherto known, the first awakening of a new and sacred life, in her rightful place, as her father's daughter. Some vague impressions of her own mother seemed to awaken new desires within her, the faint reaching out of seed that had lain buried and was now pushing itself upward to God's own atmosphere.

The fire died down presently. The soft darkness folded her about like a garment. Would God hear if she called to him ? Oh, for what should she pray ? For a chance to begin life over again ? Had not God given her that when he kept her from going out in darkness. What if she had died then ? She shuddered at the thought. She did not want to die, and oh, she was not good enough to die. Was she even good enough to stay here with the doctor and Miss Neale ?

Long afterward, it seemed as if it must be almost morning — she heard wheels crunching slowly around, and a cheerful whinny of the doctor's horse ; presently his voice, with some earnest inflections, and she could fancy Miss Neale answering.

When they came upstairs she heard him say :

"The best thing that you could do. A good night's sleep will do more for her than medicine. I hope she will begin to improve again to-morrow, now that she has nothing on her poor little conscience."

When Miss Neale came in she was snuggled down in the bed, and kept very, very still.

CHAPTER XXII.

PILGRIM AT THE WICKET GATE.

WHEN she finally fell asleep the stronghold of seeming was gone. She was very restless, with long, irregular sighs, broken as if something distressed her. She was dreaming over fragments of that secret journey. Miss Neale rose presently, and looked at her. Her pulse was racing along, her face flushed and hot, with a feverish inclination. She was so used to ministering, she was almost as good as a doctor herself. She went downstairs, for she would not disturb the doctor, and fixed a composing draught, with a touch of anti-febrile, and administered it without thoroughly rousing the child.

"Poor little dear," she said softly to herself. "It has been a rough transplanting to an unfriendly soil. Some one ought to temper the sun and the shade to her, soften the ground by gentle touches, and set her to growing rightly. All the rest of her life will be made or marred by it."

She was sleeping when the doctor went out to an early call. He looked in upon her. She was pale enough now, her skin full of fine blue lines, as if all the red blood had gone out of them.

She was so grave when Miss Neale helped her dress and gave her a dainty little breakfast. Then she sat by the window, and looked out on the rain that wrapped everything about with a grey atmosphere, lighter or deeper as the space was clear or the shrubbery thick. Miss Neale had given her some pretty rose-colored worsted to crochet. Sometimes she only wound it idly

over her thin fingers. The nails she saw had changed a good deal under Cassy's care. Really it wasn't such a very bad hand, but she would like it a little fatter.

It was one of the very busy days for Miss Neale. An old lady came in, dripping, so that she had Sheba hunt her up some dry clothes. She was in no end of trouble about her daughter, who wanted to marry a shiftless, intemperate fellow, and go North. They were all "poor white folks," and there seemed nothing for the daughter to do; but the marriage was most ill-advised, and Miss Neale finally decided the girl might come up and stay a week with her, and do some sewing, while she tried to persuade her out of such an unfortunate step. Then a young negro woman whose husband had deserted her, and left her with the care of twin babies, came for some sympathy and counsel. Miss Neale sent her out in the kitchen to have a good dinner while she and Dell had theirs, and afterward she looked up some clothing and promised to use her best endeavors to find the poor thing something to do that would give her a home. After that one or two more interruptions, and Dell was left much more to her own thoughts than Miss Neale liked.

They were not joyous ones. As Miss Neale flitted out and in, with her delicate motions that never jarred or touched or whirled anything about; the pervading, clinging grace that was so like a strain of music; a sweetness, the scent of some flowers when the dew was falling, or rather a commingling of it; an "atmosphere" as Dell came to know afterward, a repose that really quieted one, it was so free from stiffness, so little suggestive of rules; a harmonious presence, a loss of something when she went—she smiled over to Dell; she gave her a gracious or tender word; she brought a handful of flowers and laid them on the table for Dell to arrange. Everything was so restful, so purely comfortable, that Dell, with her newly awakened conscience, was beginning to feel that

she had no right to it until something had been expiated.

She was taking this under some semblance that pricked her more and more.

At mid-afternoon the doctor returned. The few cases on the slate were of no real importance. The clouds were so thick now that it was almost dark enough to be night. Dinah made him a good cup of coffee. He donned dressing-gown and slippers; entered the room where the forlorn little figure seemed to have dropped altogether, collapsed. But the big brown eyes lighted, and the lip gave a little quiver of a smile.

"You've had a long day mostly by yourself, Miss Neale tells me, and it hasn't chirked you up a bit. It's been one of her 'ministering angel' days, I call them, when the wretched and the forlorn and the generally inefficient come in to be comforted and set straight about their ways. But you don't look as if any one had comforted you much."

He pinched her cheek with a gentle touch.

"Do you want to go back to Sherburne House?"

"I'm not sure but I ought," she answered slowly.

"What now? Do you want to get back to the brick-making of Egypt? Isn't the manna in the wilderness satisfactory?"

Dell winked hard. It was so foolish to cry over every little thing.

"I'm afraid—I don't just deserve the manna," she returned hesitatingly.

"Well, these poor little bird's claws don't look much like making brick. And I am afraid dancing and feasting are beyond you. They are indulging in that at Sherburne House. And as for deserving——"

He stirred the fire and put on some cedar branches. Then he drew up the big chair, gathered Dell in his arms, and seated himself comfortably.

"What have you been doing all day? Not eating or sleeping, Miss Neale tells me."

"I've been thinking," she made answer slowly. "I don't believe I ever knew about myself—till now."

"You will go on all your life making discoveries, my little one," he said tenderly. "And what have you found out? Clearly, it hasn't been exhilarating. Perhaps it would be better to wait a little——"

"I can't," she cried decisively. "I want you to know—I want Miss Neale to know that—that I have done a great many bad things beside running away! And it seems dishonest to take all this kindness, and have you pity me and care for me, and believe the best of me, when I'm not half as good as I used to be; when I have grown worse ever since I came to Sherburne House. I didn't seem to understand it at first. I feel as if I had been dumb and blind and just had my eyes opened——"

She drew a long, sobbing breath, and thrust back the overflow of weeping that surged up like a great wave.

"My dear child." Doctor Carew held her closer in tender pity. "You are weak and nervous and must not excite yourself so. When you have understood yourself, through these eyes of the soul, you have made the greatest discovery human beings ever achieve. You can walk out into the right way, in the light; and though one stumbles often—we all do—but with one's feet set straight, we can go on with a certain confidence. My little pilgrim, I do not think you can have wandered very far astray in these few months. Come, you shall tell me all that is troubling you."

"I don't know where to begin," Dell said slowly. "I feel somehow as if I had tumbled off a high place where I felt proud and safe, and—kind of elated, don't you know, as if no one could get me away. And I've just slipped and scrambled, and feel bruised and torn, and

now it seems as if I'd never had any real right up there, and was ashamed and all——"

"The great hill of self-esteem—is that it? Do you know the old line :

He that is down need fear no fall.

And you were thinking yourself safe beyond a peradventure, but the wise Man said, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' And you were not taking heed?"

"I wasn't thinking, even"—Dell straightened herself a little, as if to catch and hold clearly the threads of the past that looked so mysterious to her. "You know at Mamma Murray's we just lived straight along. We weren't always good." She made a long pause. "But I suppose I was used to all the ways, and when I came to Sherburne House it was so different. There wasn't anything I could do. There wasn't any baby to tend, nor errands, nor sweeping, nor making the garden tidy, nor playing with lots of children. And I was dressed in Sunday clothes all the time. And I had to walk just so. I couldn't run or jump or sing or make any kind of noise. And—" he could feel the swelling of her pulses under the rush of indignation—"she didn't want me! I couldn't understand at first why I *had* to stay there; I don't see now why they didn't leave me with the Murrays until I was a young lady—it would have been easier for them."

"It would not have been legally right. You'll find, some time, that a good conscience obeys the strict letter of the law, even if something else looks pleasanter. It has been very hard for you. I don't wonder you stumbled over the Hill Difficulty and lost the way. It was so different from Mrs. Murray's pleasant garden. Well—" inquiringly.

"After a while I just didn't care," said Dell, with a

touch of the old independence. "When I couldn't do anything right, or if I did do just what she told me, she always looked as if she wished she had made it harder. And I hated the music and the French, and being shut up!"

"Yes," he subjoined, in an appreciative tone.

"And I did things——" Her face dropped down again on his shoulder, and her voice had a great tremble in it. "They were deceitful and not honest. I'd like to tell you—I meant to tell Miss Neale, but she seems so white and beautiful, as if knowing the badness would hold her away from me."

"No, it wouldn't, my dear child; never imagine that. But I am father confessor to the whole country. I've heard so many bad things that your little sins won't look very black. Go on."

Hesitatingly she confessed the stolen pleasures that had simply seemed a child's shrewdness then, the inalienable right of self-defence. The pauses, the faltering when he knew tears were uppermost, touched him inexpressibly. He could see how these experiences had come to have a vitalizing influence upon the really fine and honest substratum of her nature. Her moral introspection had been awakened, and the inherited virtues shaped by Densie Murray's generous training had come to the top again; while the dross would float off.

"My dear child," he began, "I am not going to say these were trifling faults, for the beginnings of all sins and moral lapses are much more important than we are apt to admit. If you had *not* seen them yourself, they might have become such sources of danger as to color your whole future, to keep you from attaining any really fine height. You are only a little girl as yet, but you are fashioning the future mistress of Sherburne House, who will have a great deal in her hands, who can make herself honored and beloved, who can bring back pleas-

ant memories of her father, and diffuse an atmosphere of happiness in a wide circle. So you see it is time you began to consider the sort of woman you desire to be. Not that you are to outgrow childhood with a bound. I hope much of its joyousness will remain in store for you."

Dell crept closer into the shelter of the friendly arms that were so protecting.

"I am glad you know," she said, in a soft tone. "And if I might stay—till I get real strong——"

"Stay—of course—until you get tired of us!" And he laughed with the warm, mellow music like the sound of bells coming through sunshine.

"Not till I get tired of you—that would be always. Oh—I wish—you and Miss Neale had been at Sherburne House." And her voice died lingeringly, as if loth to let the wish depart into impossibility. "Will you tell her—all?"

"Yes, my dear, if you wish it."

"I don't want to deceive any one and take kindnesses and affection—unworthily." She knew by the gentle pressure that she was certain of love here, just as she was with papa Murray. "And—it has troubled me, since I came to think it all over. It's so quiet here, and—I can't explain—it seems to make you go softly and slowly, and not rage around. I've had a very bad temper at Sherburne House. I never did before."

"Was the quality of it tried before? Perhaps you didn't know much about it?"

"If you think we children always did just what we wanted to," she said, recurring to the Murrays, "you are quite mistaken." The gravity of her tone kept it free from any suggestion of pertness. "Sometimes, when I had promised the boys to come out for a good race, I had to stay in and sew. But it was good, honest sewing, something that was needed, not a bit of ruffling that

was of no account, or trying to embroider red trees and houses on a towel," she flung out with disdain, "and mamma smiled so out of her eyes, and kissed you with such sweet lips, that if you'd felt a little cross at first, you were all sunshine then, and ready to do something else."

"I didn't mean quite that, my dear child. The wise Man, who came to set the great example, told his followers that the Gentiles had enough goodness of heart to return kindness for kindness, love for love. And he asked his disciples to take in the unthankful, the selfish, the oppressor, and even the evil-doer. So we are not to measure our tempers or our willingness by the ready manner we oblige those we love. It is when we do *not* love that the real trial comes."

"And you think I ought to have been just as good at Sherburne House."

Dell sat up very straight, indignant; her pale cheek showing a bright scarlet spot; her eyes flashing. Truly her illness had not routed the old Adamic inheritance.

"What do you think, my dear?" There was a soft, almost amused expression in the doctor's face.

"I couldn't—that's all," she cried decisively.

"The soul of the little girl wasn't changed. She was taken out of the pleasant place where she had grown happy and joyous and gay, because the great Gardener said, 'I want to transplant this flower to a different soil, in a larger place, where it can bud and blossom and bear an abundance of rich, delightful fruit, that in time will comfort and sustain weary, troubled souls; and have it grow so that the birds may come and sing in its branches.' And so for days it is kept in a shady place, it is pruned and trimmed, and, may be, left in solitude. And what if it resolved not to grow—what if it sent out thorns and gnarled, scrubby shoots?"

The spirit of defiance had gone slowly out of Dell's

face. This was a part of the work she had not been considering.

"So you see the Lord put you in the new place, to show what sweetness and strength you had gathered in the old garden."

"And I didn't have any. And that's the way they have come to blame Mamma Murray for so many things. But they blamed her first. Because I wasn't pretty, and my hair was almost red, and I wasn't graceful, and did not know French or music, and it made me angry! I shall always be grateful that the Murrays didn't put me in a home or an asylum, or send me to live out, when they had so many children of their own."

"They were very noble about it. It is one of the deeds I hope you will always remember. I think you haven't quite forgotten the lessons."

Lyndell's head drooped, and the poor little face looked pathetic.

"We older and wiser folk make a good many mistakes. Our writing on our fellow-creatures isn't much like the clear, beautiful copy set us. But we can keep trying. While we do that the Good Father knows our souls are not quite astray."

"I haven't tried much—not any," she said remorsefully. "I haven't considered the little things. I hated to have Miss Sherburne think papa Murray broke his word about the letters. I never supposed it was wrong"—Dell's face flushed hotly—"yes, I *must* have known it, or I wouldn't have asked Julius to take it secretly. And they knew nothing whatever about my coming home. But I suppose she will never believe that. And it troubles me that I should have done so many things that *must* lower them in her eyes. Oh, Doctor Carew, what shall I do to help it?"

"My child, you can only help it in the years to come. It is a bitter lesson, but we cannot learn too soon that

every wrong act causes some innocent person pain and suffering. It is not simply that they take up a burthen for us: it is we who thrust one upon them."

Dell leaned her head down on the friendly shoulder again, and cried softly. It was so much worse than she had thought. Indeed, until she came here, she had thought very little about it in the sense of real responsibility.

"Are you not tired of so much talking?" he asked sympathetically. "You are not strong yet—indeed, I think you have dropped back a little."

"All these things worried me. And I was disappointed in myself. Maybe Miss Sherburne is right, and I am very bad."

"But God gives us chances to start afresh. And he made this great break with a wise purpose. I think you are truly sorry and that when you begin again it will be with a new endeavor. He is always ready to help you. You must not be afraid to ask him for strength and for the right understanding of duty; for assistance in all things."

Dell was silent many minutes. Then she said in a low, awed tone: "I prayed about the—money. And it came. If it was all wrong——"

"My little pilgrim, you will find that a great many prayers of this kind *seem* to be answered. The children of Israel, journeying through the wilderness, asked for many unwise things, to their great sorrow. Sometimes God gives us our own way just to show us how wrong it was, when nothing else perhaps would have convinced us. There has a great deal been said and written on this subject. The faith of ignorance and the faith of childhood take everything direct from God, and it is a delightful thing to see God so clearly. But we must look on the other side before we are sure of our miracles. And in this matter what would have been right at the

Murrays, would have been right with Miss Sherburne. My dear," as Dell gave a quick sob, "this is one of the cases where you must let the dead bury their dead. You have made amends to the best of your ability so far, and we are all very glad the money has gone to its rightful owner. Just now you can do nothing more, except to second all our efforts and get well as soon as possible. I do believe I should like to see a bit of Dell Murray as she was before the fortune came to her. But you have talked quite enough and you must go to bed. I hope you will come to me in any difficulty, in any trouble. You see, but for all this episode, I should not have known you in ever so long. And other mercies may work out of the evil, in God's good providence."

He kissed her very fondly, poor, friendless little thing, with a thorny path before her. Would she be brave enough to tread it, without wrecking the noble life that might be evolved? She was frank, in spite of that curious reticence so like obstinacy; truthful, really honest with her own soul, and that augured well for her future.

Sheba came in. Miss Neale was busy with some of her poor parishioners. The doctor carried her upstairs, and Sheba stayed and sang one of her wild, pathetic hymns with a throbbing, musical refrain.

Dell lay there thinking over many things, and stirred by a strange humility. Verses of the Psalms and gospels that she had learned as punishments in the summer, came floating back to her with meanings she had failed utterly to see then. She stretched out her arms to that greater Shepherd, longing to be taken into the fold Sheba had been singing about.

Long afterward she heard a light step.

"Miss Neale," she said wistfully.

Miss Carew came and bent over her with a comforting smile. Dell clasped her arms about the yielding neck, and the lips met in kisses that said more than many words.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AS YE FORGIVE.

THERE was coming to Lyndell Sherburne, from various causes, a glimpse of spiritual life quite new, and it touched her being in a fragmentary manner ; bringing alternations of buoyancy, and then all the shades of despondency. Something in the sweetness, the patience, the tenderness, and, perhaps more than all, that high, fair beauty that occasionally crowns middle life, so unlike that of glad, volatile youth, roused the child with longing and idealization that often lift up a young soul more than efforts strenuously made for its advancement.

Miss Neale was very different from Mamma Murray. That little woman's life had been circumscribed by babies and duties that had widened it out in affection, but not in mental improvement. She was proud of having her children educated. They would be smart and do well, and get a nice bit of their own. The handsome rows of houses just down below, the ladies driving about in their carriages, the children with their maids, never roused a touch of jealousy. She was happy and content with her work, tender, upright, and true, and knew more of what went to the making of healthy bodies than nervous and introspective brains.

In this exuberant, almost riotous living, Dell had slipped out of the more refined modes of her own mother's training. The gladness and merriment had taken complete possession of her soul. They were a more natural aliment for childhood. But protest as she might at the strict rule of Sherburne House, there was something in the

spacious rooms, the grand old furniture, the dignified serving, the troops of servants, that impressed her. Her few days at the Murrys had stamped the difference more clearly on her plastic mind. If fortune had brought her back to them for life, her affection would soon have made her content, but she perceived, with the larger distinction occasionally vouchsafed, that her future sphere was to be different.

Yet it was Miss Carew who had reawakened the slumbering impression of her mother most vividly. The gentle touch of the hand, the soft voice, the tender solicitude, all wanting in Miss Sherburne, the habit of sitting at the piano and playing plaintive melodies, sometimes singing an old-fashioned ballad as day deepened into twilight, touched the soul of the child inexpressibly. The four years began to seem like something foreign grafted in her life.

On Saturday Millicent drove over with a package of clothing for Dell. Miss Carew was busy in the kitchen with some delicate preparations.

"Go through into the other room, Milly—you will find her there. Viny, take Miss Beaumanoir's parcel."

Viny grinned, showing her white teeth from ear to ear, and followed Millicent. Dell looked up, then flushed in a sort of embarrassment. She was trying to perfect some pretty embroidery stitches that had been hateful in her sight at Sherburne House.

After the first greetings were passed, Millicent began to unfasten the bundle.

"Aunt Aurelia sent over several garments that have been finished," she began. "And I hope you will not think me presuming," with a cordial smile, "because I have selected and partly made you a pretty gown. I thought I would like to do something for my little sick cousin. And I chose pink because you were so very pale. I hope you will not dislike the color."

She threw it lightly over the chair beside Dell. It was a beautiful pink flannel wrapper, with cuffs and collar of soft brown velvet, and feather stitching done in the same color. A long velvet ribbon tied it at the neck, and there was a belt of the same.

From some inexplicable feeling Dell's soul rose in protest. She hated to take favors from any of her new relations. Whatever Miss Sherburne did was in her capacity as guardian, and she was free to resign her position any time. The money spent on her came out of her father's estate, and belonged to her. She wanted to be quite free to like them or not; to go on disliking was in her secret heart.

"It is lovely," she said, with a brief intonation that cut off any feeling of enthusiasm. "You took a great deal of trouble ——"

"It was a pleasure to me—I wish you would look at it in that light. Cassy did the machine sewing, and she enjoyed it as well. I was spending the day at Sherburne House. An old friend has come with her two daughters. She used to visit Sherburne House when Aunt Julia and your papa were young. And the children are having a merry time."

"You were very generous to think of me," Dell said rather stiffly, her eyes fixed on the garment. "Thank Cassy, and—I am obliged to you."

Dell was so resolved to keep on the far outside that her air and tone were ungracious. She had unwittingly improved on Miss Sherburne's training.

Millicent was nonplussed. She had come with a peace offering, not doubting but she should find a way to her cousin's heart. Under some circumstances she could have stepped over the barrier and clasped the pale, shrinking girl in her arms, but she knew so little about her, and she dreaded to be repulsed. While she was hesitating Miss Carew entered, and a glance gave her the key to the situa-

tion. She could almost have shaken Dell for her distrustful reserve.

Milly recovered her habitual graciousness at once, and began a bright conversation about neighborhood incidents and the expected return of Major and Mrs. Stanwood from the West. Miss Carew would fain have kept her to dinner, but she had some errands to do in town.

"I suppose I can carry back the cheering message that you *are* improving," said Millicent, looking at Dell with gentle beseechingness. "We are all so anxious to have you get well."

Dell was obstinately silent.

"The week has been so unpleasant she has not been able to go out much," interposed Miss Carew. "We hope she will improve more rapidly by and by, when she gets fairly started."

"Oh, there is the doctor," cried Millicent, as he drove past. "I must see him a moment. Good-bye, my little cousin. We shall all visit you at intervals—to keep you from forgetting us."

She kissed the almost protesting lips and gave Miss Carew a graceful adieu, passing out quickly.

"What a beautiful gown! Why, it quite throws mine in the shade!" declared Miss Carew.

"I like yours a thousand times better, dear Miss Neale! I wish she had not brought it. And she—it is her gift. I don't want anything, except just what is bought with my money! I don't want them to be——"

"My dear, think a little." Miss Carew stood beside her, and drew the throbbing brow to her sympathetic heart. "Now, you are surely in the wrong. It is their place to make overtures. It would have been in the first instance, you know——"

"That is just the reason," interrupted Dell vehemently; trying very hard not to give way to tears.

"Had you seen Millicent at all, before you were ill?"

"Yes." Dell remembered the scene only too well—her interview with Leonard, and Millicent's interposition ; her own passionate repulse.

"Was she —" Miss Carew sighed. The ground was so extremely delicate for one to venture upon.

"It isn't simply her," cried Dell, with a misgiving that she could not *quite* justify herself. "It is all of them ! They do not like me. And there is no use making believe—because I came near dying —" And a long, dry sob broke Dell's voice.

"My dear child, are you going to be harder than the Saviour, who could see all things, and always knew where the blame lay. And he said—'Love your enemies.' He bade us pray to be forgiven as we forgave. If they have reconsidered and found they were in the wrong, are you right in refusing them the opportunity to make amends? My dear little Dell, consider —"

"I don't care about their making amends. I know I must go back to Sherburne House some time, and I want things to be—I wish they would let me alone and not pretend —" Then Dell began to sob in earnest.

"You do not want them to repent? My child," and Miss Carew kissed down amid the straggling furze on Dell's head, "that is vindictiveness. Now you are cruel! You are much less generous than they. One may be mistaken in one's belief, we are not always right beyond a peradventure, and when one learns this and wishes to make amends, the Saviour bids us receive him. We have no choice if we desire to follow the great Exemplar. For he cried in that last great agony—'Father, forgive them'—when they had not even repented ; when, like St. Paul, they thought 'verily they were doing right.' My dear child, I cannot allow you to begin your new life this way. You do not realize what you are saying. You do not remember that he *first*

loved us, and gave himself a propitiation for our sins. And he said : ' Do this. Follow me.' "

" I am afraid I can never be good—dear Miss Neale." And Dell pressed the soft hands to her hot, throbbing cheeks that were wet with tears.

" You were loving and kindly and obedient before, without any effort. Now you must *try*. You have come to the real things of life, the hard things, the efforts that are to shape your character for womanhood, for life, for that other unseen world. And it isn't all done in a day. That's the beauty and the comfort of it. We stray off into byways, as Pilgrim did, and some sharp knowledge convinces us. Or maybe, in the darkness when the way is tangled, we remember that sure, straight path where the light shineth. And that is all you have to do, to go back to the path you started on, and all will be well. There's such a sure foundation that you can't sink down, although your steps may falter a little. And as you go on you will come to see the way clearer. There's always a light shining out for any poor little lamb astray."

Dell was silent awhile, revolving many things in her mind, and a little shocked by her outburst.

" Yes," she said at length, " I think I *do* want them to repent, and truly see that they were cold and cruel at first, and hated me for what I couldn't help. For oh, I didn't want to come then, and Sherburne House wasn't half the paradise Murray's Row seemed. Leonard might have had it and welcome. And when they can't keep me out or push me out—it makes me—yes, it does *make* me angry, dear Miss Neale, to have them give me anything, as if they were buying me up to make friends."

" You wanted to heap coals of fire on *their* heads? "

Miss Neale raised the face and smiled down in it with motherly tenderness. " My dear, you will have many chances to do this. But it is good for evil, not evil for

evil. You are too young to look at the case from their standpoint, but you do not want to lay up repentance for yourself when you realize there has been another side. Wait patiently until you can see, as you will when you grow older. There are many mysteries that keep unfolding as we go on, and some are so plain that we wonder how they ever came to be a mystery at all. It is a great deal harder to be just than it is to be generous, and this is why I think the Lord said 'Deal justly and love mercy.' And the nearer we come to the Golden Rule, the nearer we are to justice. If you had made friendly overtures to any of your cousins, would you like to have them repulsed? What if you felt you were a little in the wrong and proffered it as an olive branch?"

Dell drew a long breath, but was silent. Her conscience pricked her. She had been cherishing some high and fine theories as to how she would demean herself in the future, holding severely aloof from her cousins until they were quite convinced they had been mistaken in their estimate of her. It looked less noble, seen in the light of the law of love. And had she not resolved to try?

Miss Neale kissed her fondly. Then she began to busy herself about household matters. Dell wiped her eyes and looked out of the window, over to the dense plantations of spruce and pine that were glistening in the sunshine. Still, it seemed to her that she should never enjoy the pretty gown.

Millicent, meanwhile, stepped into the doctor's office. He had returned for a case of instruments, having a slight operation to perform. "Hillo!" he cried cheerily. Then he noted a slight shadow on the fair face.

"Is all right at Sherburne House?" he asked.

"Yes, I have been in to see Lyndell. Do you think she is really mending? Aunt Aurelia feels that another week must be the limit of her stay. She begged me to

sound you about her return, but I can only ask straight out or keep silence. And Lyndell didn't seem very ——" Millicent paused with a slight flush.

"Did you ask *her*?" The doctor drew his brows.

"No, I came to headquarters," smilingly.

"Miss Aurelia is worlds better off without her. She needs a chance to get out of the treadmill on which she has been going for the past year. And it will take Dell a long while to get her nerves steadied. I'll tell *you*, Miss Milly, that when I said two weeks or so I made a Jesuitical reservation of two months. She isn't strong enough to enjoy the fun among strangers; she's just a bundle of prickly, sensitive nerves, and so you are all better apart for the present. Miss Sherburne needed the change as much as the child. And my dear Miss Milly, if you *can* put in a word now and then for the furtherance of my project ——"

"You are sure she will recover," Milly cried, with a sudden dread. "For, although Aunt Aurelia has not really come to loving her, I do not think she could stand the other shock."

"Nonsense. She will be well and hearty again. Don't prefigure anything so dismal! It will take time. And as for studying—when she can stand it, I'll train her in Latin and anything else she's likely to forget. You must all keep Aunt Aurelia so engrossed that she'll hardly have time to think of her. And you must come over by ones and twos and get acquainted with your cousin," he ended smilingly.

"I haven't succeeded very well in that respect," she rejoined hesitatingly.

"Have you tried?"

"A little. But she seems very ——" Milly's brows knit a trifle in her efforts to find a word sufficiently expressive and yet not harsh.

"Very much on guard? Is that what you mean?"

"That will do. And I suppose we really cannot blame her. We have not proffered her so much love that she can take us on trust. Oh, Doctor Carew, I am afraid we all began wrong. I wasn't home at first ——"

"We should be in a bad fix if nothing could ever be righted," and he smiled with grave sweetness. "But it takes time for a great many things. Some great writer said once the reason God's patience was of so grand a quality was because he had all eternity to work in. And though we have only this little life on this side, it isn't best to hurry the work in human souls; especially a child's soul, that can be so easily marred."

Millicent put out her hand. "I shall trust you," she said. "I think you have read her more truly than any one else. And oh, doctor, I am so glad the real owner of the money was found. You were quite sure ——"

"Whittingham wasn't very likely to be mistaken. And the money Dell found exactly answered the description of that Mr. Charles Mason paid to Jackson. Yes, there can be no two opinions about it."

"When you see anything that I can do" —Millicent began wistfully.

"Persuade the household they are better off without Dell," and he laughed. Then he handed her into her phaeton.

He just took a moment to look in at Dell. Something had ruffled her evidently.

"Hillo!" he cried. "'How fine we are, how proud to show' ——"

Dell made a great effort. "That is a gift from—from my Cousin Millicent," she said in a certain measured fashion that almost made the doctor smile.

"It's as sweet as she is herself." He took it delicately between thumb and finger. "Whittingham and Mrs. Kirby are coming over to dine to-morrow, and you must

put it on to do the honors. Neale, I'm going over to Craig's Creek. Two of the workmen in the factory have been mashed up in fingers or toes or something. Have dinner without me." Then he kissed Dell and was gone.

It was so very lovely that Miss Neale took Dell out for a drive after dinner while the sun was at its warmest. There was a soft reddish haze over everything, the precursor of Indian summer. The quiet, the balmy air full of fragrance, the infrequent songs that made long, almost pathetic vibrations of melody, the sombre chirp of the crickets and the rustling of the leaves in the wandering wind, soothed Dell's perturbed spirit and shaken nerves, and made her so drowsy that after she came home she took a good long nap on the old sofa, and had a really delightful evening.

When Miss Neale went to church the next morning Dell sat down to have a little communion with herself. She had been rude and ungracious to Millicent. She had conscientiously altered one sentence in her prayer last night and this morning. She had said, "forgive us our trespasses, and teach us to forgive those who trespass against us." For it seemed terrible to pray to God to mete out to you the very measure you were meting out to others when your heart was filled with bitterness against them. She couldn't dismiss it all at once. But she felt strangely humbled, and resolved to try in greater earnest than before.

There was one thing she could do—put on Miss Millicent's pretty gown. She did not want to at all. She would like to pack it up and never see it again. But there was some curious conscientiousness about it. If the doctor had not spoken of it! She knew it would be a victory over herself. There had come a mental aspiration after the right way, the spiritual grace, the strength that would guide her unwilling feet—yes, they were un-

willing. She wanted to be noble and gracious and good, but she began to realize that it was no easy task except in moments of exaltation. She thought she could love God—but if she could not love—those she had seen—Yes, it was very hard. It seemed to her that none of her favorite heroines had so struggled. She buried her face in her hands and knelt down by the little table that held a bowl of flowers and her Bible. She was not really conscious of praying; it was one of those wordless cries, one of those silent beseechings. When she rose the contention was ended. She brushed her scanty rings of hair, took out the unwelcome pink gown and put it on; tied the ribbons with nicest care. It gave her a delicate and refined look. She studied herself for moments, strenuously keeping back some tears. For she felt her dislike of Millicent had been not only unreasonable but unjust. She had sinned in the same manner but with less cause than Miss Sherburne. Let her not forget that.

She heard some voices downstairs, but her heart beat so that she had no courage to take a step. There was a light footfall, a soft rustle, and Miss Neale looked in.

"My darling child," she exclaimed, and clasped Dell in her arms, kissing the tremulous lips. "I am glad you had the courage to do this. You have taken one step toward that better purpose of love and good-will. And you look very pretty;" holding her off a little and smiling. "Millicent always displays exquisite taste."

Dell colored with contending emotion, and tears glistened in her brown eyes.

"They are all downstairs." Miss Carew laid aside her bonnet and mantle, and stretched out her hand to the young girl, who clung shyly to her as they entered the room.

Mr. Whittingham glanced her over with a kind of pleased surprise, and introduced his sister. Mrs. Kirby was a delicate, rather pretty, conventional looking

woman, but Dell felt that unassuming glance was one of inspection. Her pale cheek flushed under it, and there rushed to her mind the consciousness that here perhaps she had more than once been misrepresented. Yet was she suffering for doing well or ill?

"Upon my word!" exclaimed the doctor delightedly.

Just then Sheba announced the dinner, and it was an extremely pleasant meal. But the greatest solace to Dell was the approval shining in Miss Neale's soft eyes.

"Really," began Mrs. Kirby, as they were driving home, "I don't see anything so dreadful about that child! I call her rather diffident than forward. Her manners are pretty, too; and she seems quite well informed. Very few children would remember as much as she did about Baltimore. I found her very entertaining. I couldn't make the daring and defiant being out of the pale little thing, and I do not see how she had the courage to take that awful journey! Of course, it was a great pity that Edward should marry in that fashion, but it does seem now as if the Sherburnes ought to make the best of it, and of her."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A RED LETTER DAY.

It often seemed to Lyndell Sherburne, as the years went on, that her real life dated from this period. But if the ground had not been prepared, the seed might have fallen useless, or sprung up and withered. So many processes go on unnoticed until the one vital touch fructifies, culminates.

Dell went out nearly every day with the doctor. A friend of her mother's and of her own early girlhood had come to pay Miss Neale a visit, a rather delicate but charming old lady, past seventy, and Miss Neale was much occupied with driving her out for numerous calls, and entertaining guests who came to meet her. It was not a bad thing for Dell that she should be seen occasionally. Miss Sherburne would have been quite horrified. She had so exaggerated Dell's personal and mental defects that she would not have considered her presentable in any case.

So she shared the doctor's comfortable old buggy and soon learned to manage Betty, if his absence was prolonged, and drive her with no little skill. The doctor's practice spread over a large area. A younger practitioner had come into Ardmore, and proved a great relief to the elder, who liked now to take matters leisurely.

Ardmore was an old town with an extremely rural aspect. Gardens that were almost farms, little settlements of poor whites that were not much improvement on the negro quarters. Some northern capital had come

in since the war, and started a few industries ; a few adventurous people charmed by the climate, the comparative cheapness of land, the ease with which crops could be raised, had cast in their lots and their money, and finding themselves fixtures were doing their best to infuse a little energy and thrift among the natives.

This had brought about a line of demarcation. The southern part, stretching out to the old estates and proud inheritances devastated by the war, kept to itself. The other might have the railroads and the factories, the shops and stores. Still it was pretty and picturesque, but so different from anything Dell had ever seen that she was delighted to go meandering through its limits.

Then there were the boundless wilds that surprised her. Miles and miles of forests, here and there a great residence not unlike Sherburne House, with its wide approaches lined with massive trees, its neglected plantations, its clustering "quarters" ; single cabins of rough logs hidden away in some dell, tiny creeks winding in and out, threading their way to some tranquil river and from thence to the beautiful bay she had never seen. Wonderful coloring from the great brown trees that stood alone in a glory of copper-bronze to the groups and masses whose blue or purple green defied the wintry blast.

She learned to know the names and distinguishing marks of these denizens of the forest. They found late wild flowers, luscious grapes that ripened unseen, nooks and crannies of such beauty that Lyndell sat speechless or just raised her absorbed eyes to the doctor. Squirrels ran about unheeded, a trail of wild turkeys crossed some small open, staring at them with frightened eyes. Flocks of birds on their pilgrimages, with their curious calls of alarm or impelling cries, and occasionally such a burst of melody that the child sat spellbound.

How beautiful the world was ! What a bliss it was to

live! Every pulse within her thrilled to an ecstasy. Strange new thoughts crowded her brain, hopes for which there were no words, whose stories could not be told until the hour of unfolding. She did not know herself any more. She was so different from all the past. Her limited knowledge was as yet unaware that this was the growing out of childhood, and the entering in at the marvelous doorway of girlhood through whose paths she was to be led up to those higher realms, a sweet and noble womanhood.

Twice that week the girls from Sherburne House came over, once accompanied by Mrs. Fanshawe, but both times they missed Lyndell. Doctor Carew kept delaying his duty call, but early the following week he felt it could be put off no longer, as the first limit of Lyndell's stay had already passed.

There was an air of confusion pervading the outer aspect of the house. Trunks and boxes were piled on the porch. Servants were running to and fro. Before the doctor had alighted he learned the Stanwoods had arrived.

Miss Sherburne entered the sitting-room quite flurried. Her eyes were soft with emotion, her cheeks pink, her lips still carried the smile of welcome that had been too hearty to fade away in an instant.

"Upon my word!" cried the doctor in surprise. "Have you been adorning yourself with the bloom of youth for an old fellow like me?"

"What nonsense!" but she laughed a little. "Julia and the major have just come, and the house is running over with children, and everything in confusion. Really, I have hardly had time to breathe the past week."

"Well, you grow young and good-looking upon it. You were too much alone all summer. And you were too strenuous about everything. I told you that before. You see it has been a long strain—and bodies wear, as

well as nerves. It must seem quite like old times," and the doctor smiled cordially.

"Yes." Then a touch of hesitation was manifest. The softness of her face seemed fading out.

"I expected to come over—" she paused and drew her brows slightly. "But we had the telegram last evening; Julia was anxious to come right through—the baby was teething and not well. I have been so busy. Lyndell ——"

"You will do better without her, and she is better off where she is," with a certain decision. "I came to propose an extension of her stay. I'm not ready to pronounce her cured—to discharge her."

"But we cannot think of trespassing upon your kindness. And Miss Carew has visitors ——"

"One visitor. The house is by no means circumscribed," with a humorous laugh. "And it seems to me that you have quite enough on your hands without worrying over a convalescing girl. She's doing very well. She wants a good deal of outdoor living. Whittingham has a friend's pony, gentle as a lamb, that he means to send over for her. And Mrs. Kirby has petitioned for some visits. Neale gives her a music practice every day. And I want her under my eye for some time to come. She'll only be a care and a worry here, plumped down among these young folks. And she'll have time enough for study. Ask Mrs. Beaumanoir or Mrs. Lepage, and if they have your health and peace of mind at heart they will say the same thing."

Already Miss Sherburne had been rather overruled in the friendly, suggestive way so hard to oppose. Even Millicent had added her mite to the general fund of preclusion.

"What will you do with her, auntie," she had said with a kind of pitiful interest. "She looks like a ghost, and she isn't well enough to interest herself in study or

amusement. She is so much better off under Miss Neale's wing ; and you feel more at liberty. With the whole family here you oughtn't to have the added care. I should let the doctor keep her if he would. It's next to being a Sanitarium."

"You forget that this is her home."

"Wait until I get nearer settled, Aunt Aurelia," said Mrs. Lepage. "We shall go up to Washington in December, though I may like to leave the girls here until we get the house in order. A half-sick child is a great nuisance at the best. And there will be so much on hand. Besides, we shall all feel more free without her. She will have time enough to rule over Sherburne House. I shouldn't hurry."

Miss Sherburne had secretly hoped there would be some objection at the Carews, since she had been plainly coerced at home. Now she flushed with a spasm of vexation.

"If you think I am unwilling to do my whole duty, Doctor Carew ——"

"No I do not think it," the doctor replied with a grave deference. "You have done it cheerfully for years. But you must care a little for yourself. You cannot be as prodigal of your health as if you were but twenty. Take this pleasant reunion with the dear ones who have been like children to you and let nothing interfere. You will never regret it. And Lyndell will do well enough."

"I can't decide now." She made a deprecating gesture with her hand.

He rose. "It will all come around right," he said cheerfully. "I will announce to Dell that she is my prisoner for a good month yet."

A few days later Miss Carew came over to pay her respects to the new arrivals. Miss Sherburne apologized rather weakly.

"She can hardly be considered as out of the doctor's

hands," replied Miss Neale. " Her nerves are not very steady as yet, and the freedom from excitement is best. When she begins to look really well she will not be so sensitive."

And so Dell's battle was fought without a word from her. She was more than delighted. She had a nervous shrinking from all these Sherburne relatives in their exuberant health and family pride. She wanted to get well acquainted with her new self, to test the strength of her new aims and resolves. She shrank from the bizzare notoriety she had so ignorantly achieved. A finer ideal was being evolved in her child's brain, a truer estimate in her soul.

The hours with the doctor were far from being unproductive. He found her not only intelligent, but ambitious. Densie Murray would have been delighted with this turn of advancement. He saw how hard it had been for the poor child to be suddenly clipped and restrained in her ardors and enthusiasms. And though his instructions had none of the formality of the schools, it enlarged her mental vision while it served to create a thirst for general knowledge.

Lyndell grew stronger physically, joyous and eager; but her quick sense, a sort of latent development, or a disused birthright, led her to watch and note usages different from those into which circumstances had plunged her. She understood there might be diversities without real faults, that what was proper enough in one sphere of life might be out of place in another, that refinement was not always affectation, and that truth might sometimes defeat itself by rudeness, or even brusquerie. The gracious harmony of Miss Neale affected her like a strain of music.

She came downstairs one morning, after having secluded herself for half an hour, with a note in her hand.

"Dear Miss Neale," she began with tender entreaty, "will you read this and tell me if it would be unwise to send it to my Cousin Millicent. I was rude and ungrateful to her that day she brought me the gown. And I had to fight with myself when I put it on. I didn't want to take anything like a gift from any of them. But I have been thinking—and trying a little—oh, my dear Heart's Delight," and she knelt on Miss Neale's footstool, laying her arms across the elder's lap, "I can't bear to feel that I am in the wrong. I wanted to believe, as I did at first, that the fault was all theirs. But I have seen so many things that I might have done differently, and that I have wished undone. The bitterness and shame is that you can't undo all of them," and her face was drowned in scarlet. "But this I could do. Miss Millicent never was unkind to me. The very first proffer I repulsed."

Miss Neale glanced over the note slipped softly into her hand. It was a frankly worded apology, if it lacked some of the grace of society training. And she said—for which Miss Neale in her heart gave her infinite credit—"I wore it the next day, Sunday. Everybody thought I had improved in looks, but I am sure it was the added prettiness of your taste and kindness. I should like to thank you in person."

Miss Neale bent over and kissed her. "I am very glad you wished to do this, I think it simply right. You can send it by one of the boys if you prefer."

"I think I would rather mail it."

"Very well; it shall go over to the office."

"Do you suppose Miss Millicent has staid away because—" and Dell flushed again.

"They have all been very much engaged. My dear, do not say Miss Millicent. Call her 'cousin' until you feel more familiar."

"And do you suppose—I will have to say 'aunt'—it

seems so—so strange to think of them as real relatives ! But I always said ‘ Aunt Maggie ’ to Mamma Murray’s sister ; ” and she gave a sort of nervous, embarrassed laugh.

“ Did you never say ‘ aunt ’ to Mrs. Beaumanoir ? ”

“ I never called her anything when I—had to speak directly to her. I always said—‘ your mother ’ to the children,” replied Dell hesitatingly.

“ And Miss Sherburne ? ”

Dell colored violently. “ I had a feeling that she would not like me to call her ‘ aunt. ’ And I did not want to,” added the child with a touch of the old defiance.

Miss Carew gave a soft little sigh. ‘ She could well understand the disappointment of her lifelong friend, but this persistent bitterness was wholly foreign to her nature.

“ My dear,” she said gravely, looking into the flashing brown eyes, “ you will find, in the course of time, that relationship counts for a good deal with most of the old county families. It is better for you that you should pay your relatives the respect due them until you learn to love them. Millicent has always been a great favorite of mine, and I consider her an especially lovely girl. We shall have to admit that there have been many unfortunate incidents in your homecoming, and some of them you must strive to overlive. You cannot afford to place yourself in a wrong light and justify disapprobation. And I think as you grow older you will not care to do it. Miss Sherburne’s disappointment, all the way through, has been very hard to bear. But you have not been to blame for that.”

Dell’s heart swelled and her eyes filled with tears. “ I don’t believe,” she said with resolute dignity, “ that my own mamma was to blame either. And she loved papa so very, very dearly. I can remember that, and

how she used to sit and cry over the picture. And she was very beautiful. Why, there was a portrait of her!" Dell started up suddenly, with imperious demand written in every line of her countenance.

"There is a sealed package that you are to have when you are fifteen. It is in Mr. Whittingham's hands. Then you may know more of the story. Can you not be brave and patient? It will not be very long to wait now. You must study in all things to bring no discredit on your mother's memory, my child. I think it would be her wish that you should make friends with your father's people."

"But when they don't want me!" Dozens of little recollections stabbed Lyndell, and the hot blood rushed to her face.

"There is one who does—Millicent. And through her, supplemented by your own endeavor, I think you can win others. Promise me to try."

Dell swallowed over a big lump in her throat. The soft, entreating eyes disarmed the resolute unwillingness. She clasped her arms about Miss Neale's neck and kissed the fond lips.

"For your sake," she said with a falter that showed how hard the concession really was. She stood still beside her a full minute, drawing quivering breaths. "Oh," she cried, "my dear darling Miss Neale, I've been trying to get so nearly right in my heart that I could say the Lord's Prayer honestly and truly. I wouldn't mind forgiving them all, and keeping them quite outside, but it isn't the way I want to be forgiven. I shouldn't like—Cousin Millicent to do so to me. Oh, how can I? 'As we forgive those who trespass against us.' It is such a solemn thing."

"Yes, my dear. And we try our whole lives long. But God sees the effort, and when it is made in all sincerity, even if we fail of the highest mark, he remem-

bers, and is merciful. No, we would not like him to mete out to us the measure we give to one another. Darius is going in town ;" the old servitor had come to the window to signify that he was ready to start on his errand for Miss Neale. So she added : " Give him your letter."

Dell slipped it into the envelope and sealed it. After standing silently by the window awhile, she sat down to the piano and began to go over an exercise. She wondered in her secret heart if Miss Neale ever had to try very hard for anything ! Were not some people naturally good and sweet—like Mamma Murray ? Ah, *she* didn't try much there. It was when trials accumulated that grace and strength were needed, as she began vaguely to realize.

The Stanwoods brought a fresh and stirring atmosphere into Sherburne House. They had been out on the frontier for the past three years. Mrs. Stanwood was much less conventional than Mrs. Lepage. Neither had she experienced the extreme chagrin at her brother's marriage that had so stung Mrs. Beaumanoir. Her own, at that time, was too new and too full of interest. The three sisters had not met since their father's funeral, though Mrs. Stanwood had been kept informed of the search for Edward's child and its results.

In the interval of other confidences, she listened to a somewhat softened account of recent events. Miss Sherburne had unconsciously modified her opinions concerning the Murrays, though she was still secretly mortified that they would receive no compensation for their care of Lyndell.

" It's quite a romance all the way through," declared Mrs. Stanwood, with eager interest. " I do suppose the child outraged your sense of propriety, Aunt 'Relie," and she laughed with a dimpling face. " We should rather admire that sort of pluck out on the verge of civi-

lization. I can't help thinking you made a great mistake in so abruptly breaking off associations with the Murrays. A child who would give them up at once, would be a mean, ungrateful little prig! I, for one, would be ashamed of her. I am all curiosity to see her, and truly sorry she doesn't inherit the Sherburne good looks. Deny it as we may, comparative prettiness is a good thing in woman when you can't have genuine beauty."

What with babies and unpacking and calls of friends, Mrs. Stanwood had not even found time for a drive. She had an idle hour Saturday morning as Millicent came winding up the avenue in her phaeton, and she ran down.

"Don't you want to give me the spare seat, Milly," she cried. "I'm dying for a bit out of doors."

"I am going over to Ardmore," the young girl said slowly. She had received Dell's note an hour ago, and was touched by its frank admission, but she *did* prefer going alone. "Aunt Aurelia wished to send a message——"

"Ardmore! The very place!" cried Aunt Julia eagerly. "I want to see that fearful and wonderful child. I must confess that I admire her. She ought to have *one* friend in the family."

"I can answer for one," and Millicent smiled significantly. "Yes, I shall be delighted to take you."

Aunt Aurelia came with her errand. Mrs. Stanwood was ready in a trice, and they drove away.

"I've a curious sympathy for the stranger within the Sherburne gates," she began. "I can imagine her consternation at finding herself alone in that great house with Aunt 'Relie, when she had been one of a houseful of children, running wild and having no end of good times. It was like shutting up a squirrel in a cage. Aunt 'Relie belongs to the old school, very nice and decorous and all that, but it has had its day. I can't

understand why she wanted to keep her so rigorously under her own eye. Was she so very *outré*?"

"I only saw her once in the summer. Len had been tormenting her and she flew in a passion. None of us considered how horribly homesick she must be, since we were always at home in Sherburne House. Violet thought her coarse looking, but she is thin and delicate enough now. Her skin is almost transparent, and her eyes are beautiful. Her hair all came out—I'm afraid that it is going to be red," confessed Millicent deprecatingly.

"Well, red hair is all the rage. Blue eyes, of course."

"No. The loveliest brown you can imagine, like the pile of velvet, and raying off sparks when she is provoked. Oh, Aunt Julia, it seems as if we ought to make the poor little thing feel at home among us when we have all had so much love."

"My dear girl! Of course we must. If father had not clung so obstinately to that crotchety English idea that an entail must go only in the male line! There are no real entails in this country, only wills. Of course we should all enjoy Leonard being master of Sherburne House. Well—who knows?"

She uttered a significant little laugh. Millicent colored vividly.

The air was soft and delightful. Ardmore quite gave one a shock in improvements, Mrs. Stanwood declared. They turned in the direction of the Carews. As they neared the gate they met the doctor. Lyndell leaned out and her eyes encountered those of Millicent. A glad smile lighted up her face.

The doctor sprang down and greeted his guests. Millicent came around to Lyndell's side, and caught the child's hand.

"I had your note this morning," she whispered, her face against Dell's cheek. "It was very sweet in you to

write it—brave, too; and we ought to be the best of friends. Can't you trust me to learn to love you? Can't you love me a little, and in time all will go right. I have brought a new aunt, who is sure to like you," and she kissed Lyndell's quivering lips.

The doctor came and lifted her out. Miss Neale had bundled her up like a mummy, the air being a trifle sharp when they started. A round, rosy face, soft as a peach, was bent down to hers with a cordial kiss, and an arm encircled her with a touch of sympathy as they walked up the path.

"We really ought not to stay," said Millicent, as Miss Neale was hospitably urging them to lay aside their wraps.

"Nonsense! We can have a good talk over the dinner. I'm hungry as a bear," declared the doctor, "and you don't want to see me unamiable," he added laughingly.

Dell shyly begged Millicent to come upstairs with her.

"Oh," she cried, turning her lustrous eyes up to the young girl's face, "are you quite sure you forgive my rudeness—not only about the pretty gift, but all the times we have met?"

"My little cousin, I am afraid you have a much larger score to forgive. We have all been unfriendly. We have not made you welcome to Sherburne House, your papa's house and your own. But if you will let us begin anew! I am the eldest girl and ought to set the best example. Will you let me be your friend? And if you could come to me with whatever troubles you—oh, don't cry, my dear—for I know we can find some way to be happy. I want you to look your best for Aunt Julia. May I brush your soft, pretty hair? It is the color of a newly ripe chestnut."

"I'm afraid it is going to be red." Dell laughed

nervously through her tears. "Mamma's was such a lovely golden. Mine was good enough until it began to turn and grew streaky. May I—would you like me to put on my pink gown? Miss Neale said the brown velvet just matched my eyes."

Millicent comforted her and helped to make her as pretty as possible.

"You are not quite so thin," she said with an encouraging smile. "Your cheeks are filling out, and you have a cleft chin. Aunt Julia has a great dimple in hers. And your ears are like shells."

Dell colored with a pleasurable emotion. She went downstairs with a curiously light heart, feeling somehow that Millicent understood the tumultuous, unspoken thoughts. The humiliating self-consciousness was gone, and when Aunt Julia looked up with a smile and made a pretty gesture that was an invitation for Dell to come and sit beside her, the child crossed the room with a joyous step.

She was relating a bit of Western experience to the doctor, but she placed her arm caressingly about Dell, who felt drawn to her at once. There was just the faintest suggestion of Mamma Murray. All the world seemed glad and bright, and the child took a long flight on the wings of hope to a sunny clime where there were unclouded skies. Her face was almost transfigured.

"And a little loving appreciation might have done it before," Millicent sighed remorsefully. Was this part of the daily work in God's world? "to make their faces shine with joy and gladness."

Lyndell was really at her best estate. She felt so at home with Miss Neale and the doctor; there was a rush and overflow of delight that the tall, sweet girl with the Madonna face cared enough for her to be her friend, and that this gay, bright, smiling, and beguiling Aunt Julia had found something in her to approve. She

scarcely uttered a word, but she was very happy, and perhaps there is no inspiration like it.

They talked of the changes the war had made, the seething and settling down, the new ideas, laughed over some of the youthful pranks and pleasures. Evidently Mrs. Stanwood had been a great favorite with the doctor and Miss Neale.

Aunt Julia watched Dell furtively out of one eye, an art gained by shrewd experience. Her manners had a natural grace—training would have betrayed its newness. Her voice was soft: there was no aggressiveness of demeanor. She was not unlike hundreds of tolerably well-bred children. Had Aunt Aurelia been looking at her all this time through a distorted vision; had her injustice brought about the very qualities she had predicated?

They had to go presently, though Mrs. Stanwood declared she was longing to come and spend the day, if Miss Neale wouldn't mind two babies and a nurse.

"And I *do* hope you mean to allow Dell to come over to us for a visit, if you can't discharge her as cured?" she said gayly to the doctor.

"When she's a little steadier, a little stouter, and able to give me some credit, we may take you in on our rounds some day."

"For it almost looks as if we had come in and taken possession and pushed the poor little princess out." She put her arm familiarly over Dell's shoulder. "It's a long while since we have all been together. And you belong to the clan Sherburne, my dear, and are one of us. We will make good our claim to you, never fear. I can't tempt you with very fascinating companionship, for I have only a big boy at school and two babies—" she paused a little, and a mysterious tenderness suffused her face, thinking of the little girl who "was not," who would have been about Dell's age. "But I'm a host in

myself, and I know you cannot help liking your uncle, the major, who will be down presently."

Dell gave the plump arm a squeeze and was frightened. But it only elicited a long, fond kiss.

"I'm coming over some day for a visit," Millicent whispered in her ear.

Then the doctor put them in the phaeton. He had to take a long journey, and perhaps would not be home until late. He came and pinched Dell's ear and looked into her shining eyes, then kissed her without a word and was off, at the call of the dying, where he could only administer tender human consolation, and smooth the path for a weary soul.

Dell meant to have a nice long talk with Miss Neale, but she had only said: "Oh, isn't she delightful!" when Miss Neale had to go out to the doctor's office. Another call afterward, "Maum Juno's little gran'darter had done gone tumbled in a tub of bilen water an' was nigh onto scalt to def."

"You won't mind staying alone?" Miss Neale said with that inexpressible sound in her voice that, like a perfume, lingered after she had spoken.

"Oh no," Dell replied.

Miss Neale picked up rolls of old linen, washes, and salves, and started on her errand of mercy.

Dell took her favorite seat by the window. No, she did not mind being alone with such lovely subjects to think about. "Aunt Jue." Would she ever dare call her that? Cousin Millicent! Suddenly the whole State of Virginia was bounded by rivers of hope and smiling hills of tender effort, a great beautiful bay and inlets full of delight and joy and sunshine. And the capital seemed to be Sherburne House. All the people far and near could come—there was room for a multitude. She did not want to shut any one out now. If there was some pretty corner for her and Miss Millicent, no, Cousin

Millicent, and Aunt Jue, with her face full of smiles and dimples.

She must have fallen asleep, for when she opened her eyes Miss Neale was smiling, and Mr. Whittingham stood at the gate, his own handsome horse proudly arching his neck, and another, not so large, but sleek and shining, and with great eyes that almost laughed. A negro lad had hold of the bridle.

"I think the call is especially for you," said Miss Neale.

Dell sprang up. "Oh," she cried in a tremor, "was he in real, solemn earnest? And is that the pony? How beautiful!"

Mr. Whittingham entered and shook hands with them both.

"Why, you look like a new girl," he said in a quaint sort of surprise. "Has the doctor compounded some wonderful tonic? I'm sorry he is away. But the pony has come to stay a week, and then, if you agree, he may go on and on——"

"But I don't know how to ride." Dell raised her eyes in a kind of laughing dismay. "I went to a circus once and had a ride on an elephant. It took such monstrous steps that you felt as if you were going down in the depths of the ocean. And the donkeys at Central Park——"

"If Miss Neale didn't mind I might give you a lesson." The soft, pink cheeks, the lustrous eyes and the restless, curving lips made her strangely pretty, Mr. Whittingham thought. Her unexpected pleasure gave him a quiet joy. He had thought a great deal about her in the last fortnight. He was her guardian, and it *was* in his power to make her poor little life brighter, to give her the privileges and the rights befitting the heiress of Sherburne House.

Miss Neale smiled and looked from one to the other.

"You won't be afraid?"

"Why, no," Dell answered with a very little touch of hesitation. Three months ago she would have gone wild over such a prospect.

"Well, if Miss Neale will get you ready. The wind has fallen, and it is very pleasant out here in the sunny avenue."

Miss Neale found one of her own skirts and a jacket she had been making for one of her poor. It fitted Dell very nicely. She put on the pretty scarlet cap she found so comfortable in the carriage.

"Take a lump of sugar out to her. I find a great many friendships have their corner stone laid in sweetness. Here, Bonny."

Bonny rubbed her nose in Mr. Whittingham's hand. Dell held up the lump of sugar; but hesitated the least bit. Bonny looked so wistful, so entreating. Dell stroked her nose, her mane, and in an instant she loved her.

Mr. Whittingham mounted her and settled her foot in the stirrup. Handing her the rein he led the pony, who went gently along as if careful of her precious load. Dell's nervousness subsided in a few moments. An exhilaration came to her, a dash of her old courage and vigor. She felt as if she had wings; she smiled back at Miss Neale: a bright, happy girl. It seemed to her that she had never been quite so happy since that fateful Saturday in Murray's Row.

Bonny paced very gently up and down. Then Mr. Whittingham let her go alone.

"You will do pretty well, I think. We must not tire you out with the first lesson. Hasn't it been long enough, Miss Neale?"

"Yes," she answered.

The grave, kindly man lifted her down, repaid by her sunny smile. What was there about her—or was it his sympathy that had been so thoroughly awakened.

Darius took Bonny to her new quarters. Mr. Whittingham entered the house with Dell's soft hand slipped in his.

"You are so good to me," she said tremulously. "And I have made you so much trouble from the very beginning. I am so sorry. And I am going to try—in solemn earnest—to do what is right, to be—obedient —" and she swallowed over a great lump.

"My little girl"—one would hardly think Mr. Whittingham's voice could be so tender—"My little girl, matters have been made much harder for you than was at all necessary. And I mean that they shall be better. I want you to feel that I have your interests and your pleasures at heart, and never hesitate to apply to me for anything you want."

"Oh," she cried remorsefully, "I asked you for that money, and then I—" her voice broke.

"My dear, let bygones be bygones. I ought to have taken you to New York myself. It was cruelly unjust to ask you to forget friends who had been so good to you. I see a great many things that must have been bitter for you to endure. When you go back to Sherburne House there will be a great difference. And—I have some wonderful news about the Murrays. You may show it to the doctor—to any one."

He fumbled in his pocket and drew forth a newspaper. There was a curious triumph in his eyes, in his very tone, as he said, pointing out a paragraph :

"Perhaps you may not quite understand it. Murray's Row has been sold for a very large sum, and some splendid houses are to be erected on the site. It has made Mr. Murray a rich man, independent of his business. And I am sure he is worthy of the best of good fortune. I honor and esteem him, and you must never forget their goodness. He would not take a penny for his four years' care of you."

"As if I *could* ever stop loving them!" Dell wiped away the fast-flowing tears. "I shall wait until I am grown—for now I have resolved that I won't trouble Miss Sherburne, nor do anything mean or underhand. I promised papa Murray," and her voice had a little ring of pride. "And—Mr. Whittingham—did you give Tessy that money I asked you to?" she inquired eagerly.

"I couldn't, my dear child. You were under age, and I could not legally bestow such a gift. Then, too, Mr. Murray would not take it. You must make all the returns in the years to come, and I sincerely hope you will. It is a sacred duty: a point of honor. Respect Miss Sherburne's feelings on the subject. Some time she may come to view it in a more correct light. And now—if you want anything, you will not hesitate to ask me? If it is wrong, I shall tell you so frankly."

He held both hands and looked steadily into her eyes. Then he bent down and kissed her gravely on the forehead.

He resisted Miss Neale's persuasions to remain to supper, but promised to come over some evening soon.

The two had a quiet supper together. Then they returned to the home-room and Miss Neale drew her chair up to the cheerful blaze, for the evening was somewhat chilly. Dell sat on an ottoman and laid her head on Miss Carew's knee, tenderly caressing the soft hands. They talked about Mr. Murray's good fortune, which the elder understood in its wider significance. And Dell told the story of her life with them, which was like a pastoral in its simplicity. But Miss Neale laughed softly over that fateful afternoon, and realized the shock.

"I suppose I did look like a guy," said Dell ruefully. "We never played in our best clothes. I shouldn't want to dance for the children in Murray's Row, now; but oh, it was delightful then, until she looked out of the carriage at me." Even now Dell shuddered. "Oh, Miss Neale,

dear Heart's Delight—do you think I shall ever come to *love* Miss Sherburne ? ”

“ You can try to obey her and pay her the respect due her position,” returned the persuasive voice.

“ But the doctor said—the unkind and the unthankful. And there is the prayer ! I must be very wicked—I believe I do not really *care* about her loving me. The others may have her ——”

“ You will come to see matters in their true light when you are older. A child's soul cannot take in everything. Experience will be one of your best teachers, and love grows. When the soul is full of it, the unkind and the unthankful may have a little share ; it overflows, and yet there is always plenty. Remember this, that love begets love, just as dislike begets dislike.”

Then they talked of Millicent and Mrs. Stanwood. Dell had shown an unusual delicacy for a child who felt her wrongs so keenly, in not expatiating on the domestic affairs at Sherburne House. It was very rarely that she inveighed with bitterness against its mistress, and Miss Neale felt like blaming her friend for not endeavoring to win the child's regard when a little kindness would have done it.

The clock struck ten.

“ My dear child,” she cried in alarm, “ the doctor will think me crazy for allowing you to stay up so late. You must go to bed this moment.”

“ I hoped he would come.” There was a touch of disappointment in Dell's tone.

“ I will not tell him a word of your joyful news. You shall have that pleasure.”

Dell rose and stood there thoughtfully, her eyes caught by the waning firelight. The soft glow shadowed and shaded, brought out her best points, prefigured the change and advancement both of the child's soul and body. The lustrous eyes looked steadily, bravely into the

future with a clear and solemn shining, the broad brow, and conformation of the temples indicated strength and earnestness and a certain nobility, if not too deeply crushed and weighted with trivial bonds.

The mouth *was* wide, but something in the tremulous, anticipating joy of to-night gave it a sweetness, and certain tender curves. Would she learn how to use them so that they might express her truth and tenderness, rather than a proud, obstinate indifference? Would she learn to be lovely in feature and expression from some inward light of the soul, to reach that highest standard, which, in this swift gleam seemed possible! "I am so happy," she said in her straightforward, child-fashion, "that I feel as if I could be good."

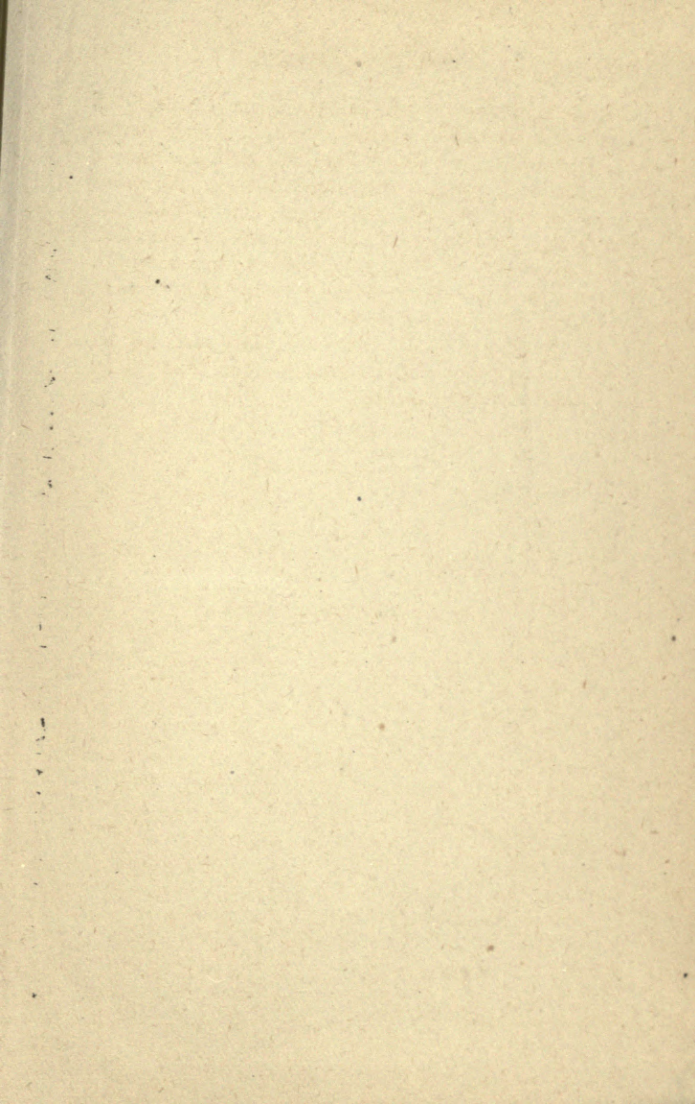
She lay in her little bed, whether awake or asleep she could never clearly tell, and lived over plans for the future, saw herself as in a vision. She would be the gracious and kindly mistress of Sherburne House, in the long years to come. She would make it a beautiful place, where every one would be sure of a welcome, where little children would be eager to come and frolic in the wide paths and soft, fragrant grass. The cousins—somehow by that time she would have won their love—and those who were lonely, in any want or distress, or ill and suffering, as Mamma Murray and Miss Neale had done to her, so she must do to others, make them happy; it was such a glorious thing to be happy. And somehow, because Miss Neale was single, so lovely and beloved, and, because she and Con had said such dreadful things about Miss Sherburne being an "old maid," she would take them back by her living out of them all: by being Miss Sherburne. She could see herself—not as pretty as Miss Neale, but softer and kindlier than Aunt Aurelia, and—growing really old—with white hair and many years.

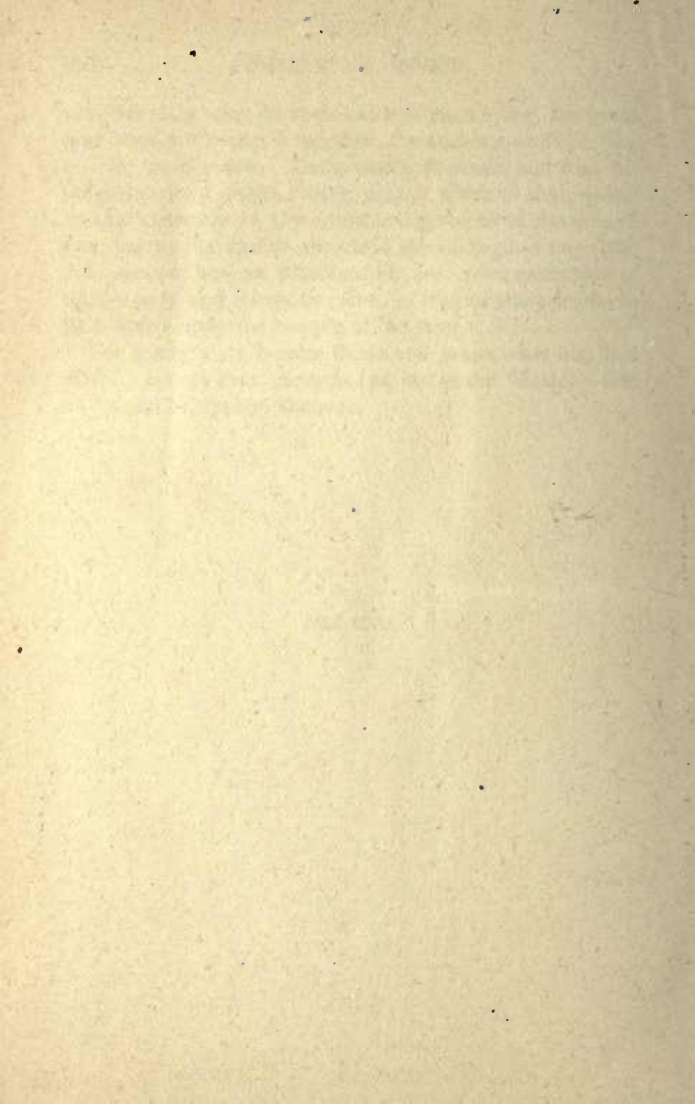
The midnight moon came up and looked into the cham-

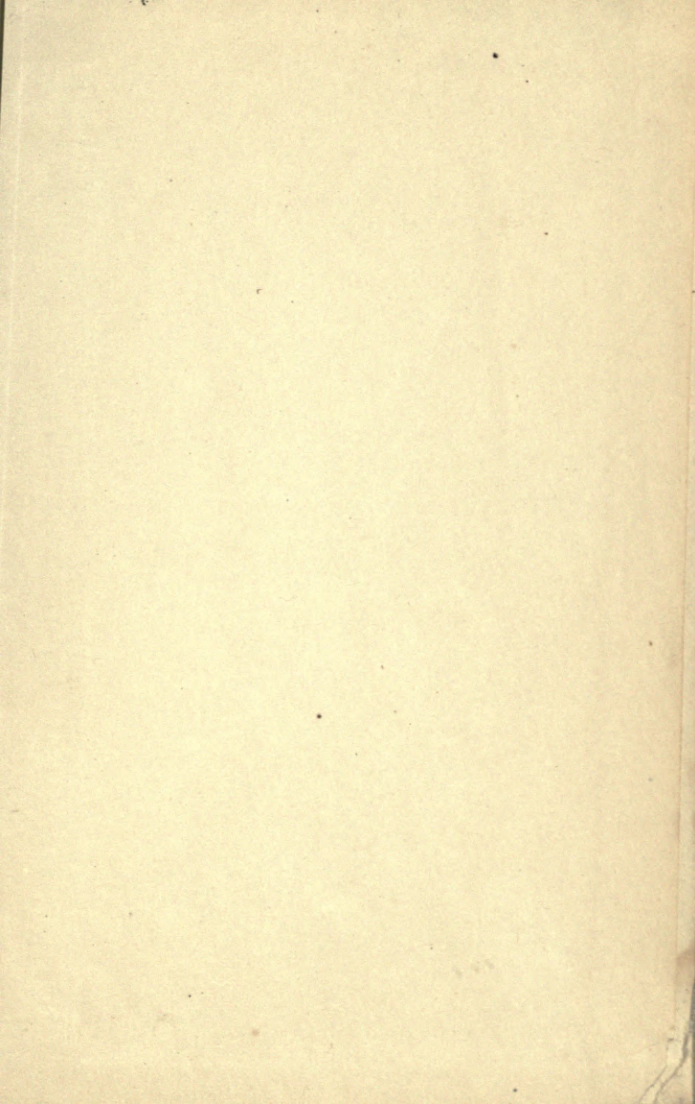
ber, the stars went on their endless journeying, the great pine woods whispered together, the streams went purling onward to the sea. There was soft music and fine, intangible, dewy odors ; long grand silences that would awake presently in the murmuring voices of dawn and day, just as the soul of the child would begin a new life, not dreams, but an illumination and comprehension of things past and things to come, of fragmentary truths to be builded up in the temple of the soul.

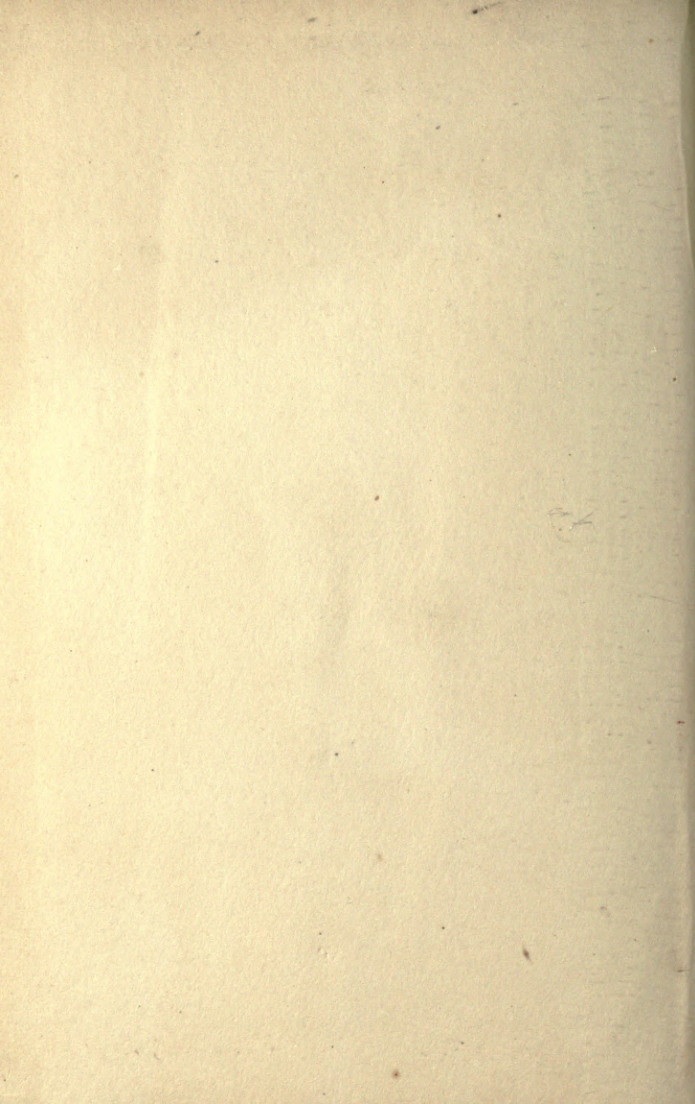
For going over human fields one reaps what one has sown. Happy that one who can lay at the Master's feet an armful of ripened sheaves.

THE END.











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